4: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1957
FA28 Mossi FA28

SECTION OF ANTHROPOLOGY

AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE MOSSI PEOPLE*

By Elliott Percival Skinner**

Department of Anthropology, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.

121 The African Sudanic states were the subject of a discussion presented before The New York Academy of Sciences in 1949. At that time Joseph Greenberg discussed the rise of these states and evaluated the theories assigning the predominant part in their formation to Caucasian influences. However, the Negro genesis of the Mossi Sudanic state never has been seriously questioned.[1] In this paper I propose to analyze the political system of the Mossi in the light of such questions as: the power structure of the African state; the conquest theory of state formation; and the presence of feudalism or feudal-type states in the Sudan.

105 The one and one-half million Mossi represent the largest population aggregate in what is now known as French West Africa. They inhabit an arid 125,000 square miles of sub-Saharan area drained by the Black, Red, and White Voltas and their tributaries. The Mossi are described physically as "true" Negroes as distinguished from the other Sudanic types. Their language belongs to the Mossi-Grunshi groups of the Niger-Congo family of African languages. In many respects their culture is similar to those of such Voltaic groups as the Tallensi, Dagomba, and Mamprussi peoples of the Northern Gold Coast (Ghana). The people in this Voltaic region are mainly agriculturalists who grow several varieties of millet and sorghum. They rear some cattle, sheep, and goats, but do little fishing or hunting. Their kinship systems are based on patrilineal segmented lineages. Throughout this entire region we find the institution of earth priests who are ritual owners of the land, but political organization is highly segmented and acephalous, with the exception of the centrally organized systems of the Dagomba, Mossi, and Mamprussi.

175 The *Tarikh es Soudan*, a chronicle written by Es Sadi, who lived in Timbuktu during the early seventeenth century, records that the Mossi first appeared on the historical scene about 1328. Between the years 1328 and 1477 the Mossi of the northern kingdom of Yatenga attacked and conquered Timbuktu, sacked Macina, and raided the towns of Bagana and Walata held by the Songhoi. In turn they were defeated by Sonni-Ali, the famous Songhoi ruler, who even invaded their territory, capturing slaves and booty. Askia El Hadj Mohamed, ruler of the Songhoi, raised a holy war

[122] *This paper, illustrated with lantern slides, was presented at a meeting of the Section on May 27, 1957. The field work on which it is based was conducted between November 1955 and January 1957 and was made possible by a fellowship of the Ford Foundation's African Studies Program, New York, N.Y.

**The author accepts sole responsibility for the contents of this paper.

4: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1957
FA28 Mossi FA28

against the Mossi in 1497 and defeated them, but he failed to make them embrace Islam. The Mossi and Songhoi fought several other wars until Songhoi power was broken by the Moroccans, who captured Timbuktu in 1590.[2] 175

The Mossi first came to the attention of the Europeans during the travels of Heinrich Barth, J. Dupuis, and Edward Bowdich, but the first European, G. A. Krause, did not enter Mossi country until 1888. Krause was followed six months later by Louis G. Binger, but the Mossi became suspicious and closed their territory to other Europeans. About 1894, one Ferguson, a British mulatto, safely arrived at Ouagadougou, the Mossi capital, and signed a treaty with the supreme Mossi ruler placing the area under British protection. The French arrived in the country in September 1896 and, refusing to honor the British treaty, conquered the Mossi and secured control of the country.

The Mossi traditional history goes back to about the eleventh century and is part of a tradition relating the origin of the Dagomba, Mamprussi, and Mossi peoples. The Mossi claim descent from Nyennega, the daughter of a Dagomba ruler, who fled from her father's home to marry a hunter by the name of Riallé. This man had left his father's country and was living in exile as a result of a quarrel over the chieftainship. The product of the union between Riallé and Nyennega was a son called Wedraogo in honor of the stallion that carried his mother to the north. At the age of fifteen the boy Wedraogo went back to the Dagomba to visit his grandfather and was given 4 horses and 50 cows. According to tradition, when Wedraogo left the Dagomba country to return north many Dagomba horsemen followed him, because their country was overcrowded. Wedraogo and his followers rode northward and conquered his father's people, the Boussansi, and decided to live in a place called Tankurn (Tengdodogo—old country). Here Wedraogo married a Boussansi woman called Pouiriketa, who bore him three sons. Diaba Lompo, the eldest, was sent out to rule Fada N'Gourma; another, called Rawa, was sent to rule a place called Zondema (now part of Yatenga); the youngest, Zoungrana, remained with his father at Tengkodogo. 173

Tradition states that the Boussansi were only one of a group of small but warlike peoples who inhabited this region. The others were the Ninisis, the Kibissi, and the Gourounsi. These groups were constantly at war with one another and they made frequent alliances with stronger peoples to fight their enemies. A Ninisi chief visited Tengkodogo and, seeing the strength of the Dagomba, sought an alliance with Wedraogo. The Ninisi chief sent Wedraogo a woman called Pouitenga as a wife for Zoungrana, Wedraogo's son. A few years later the Ninisi asked Wedraogo to come and rule their country, but he died at a place called Sagabtenga before he could establish complete control of their territory. Zoungrana succeeded his father as head of the Mossi (a new tribe resulting from the union of the Dagomba and the local inhabitants) but, wishing to remain at Tengkodogo, he sent his son Oubri to complete the conquest of the

173 11. Nattia, son of the preceding. He lived at Dazouli.
174 12. Namoëro, son of the preceding.
13. Kida, brother of Nattia. He lived at Ouagadougou.
14. Kimba, brother of the preceding. He lived at the same place.
15. Kobra, son of the preceding. He lived at Uougandé.
16. Sana, son of the preceding. He lived at Ouagadougou, where all his successors resided up to the present day.
17. Guiliga, son of the preceding.
18. Oubia, brother of the preceding.
19. Mottaba, son of the preceding.
20. Ouarga, brother of the preceding.
21. Zombéré, son of the preceding.
22. Kom, son of the preceding.
23. Sagha, son of the preceding.
24. Koulougou, son of the preceding.
25. Savadoro, son of the preceding.
26. Karfo, son of Savadoro.
27. Baoro, brother of Savadoro.
28. Koutou, son of the preceding.
29. Sanom, son of Koutou.
30. Boukary /sic/ Koutou, son of Koutou.
It was Bokary Koutou who was dethroned by Lt. Voulet in 1896.
31. Kouka (Siguiri) with whom Lt. Voulet signed a treaty whereby Mossi territory was placed under the suzerainty of France
32. Kom, the present Moro Naba (1910).

148 As may be seen, therefore, the Moro Nabas continue to exist among the Mossi. France even provides them with a pension, which first amounted to 25,000 francs a year and has since been lowered to 18,000 francs. They no longer hold any powers, however, and they do nothing whatever.

175 I have found in the Monographie of the circle some interesting data on expeditions led by the Moro Nabas into Kipirsi territory, which always resisted Mossi conquest. Naba Koundoumié, sixth successor of Oubry, /463/ first led a bloody expedition to Kayao and Tiou. Naba Dawoéma, eighth successor of Oubry, waged war to the north of Yako. Naba Ouarga, twentieth successor of Oubry, settled

175 at La and waged a series of battles in the Yako region. Naba Koutou, twenty-eighth successor of Oubry, fought in the Sourgou region (Kipirsi). And finally, during the last few years preceding our occupation, Naba Sanom and Bokary Koutou attacked the village of Lallé.

643 631 According to Moulins' data, it was Naba Koundoumié, sixth successor of Oubry, who set three of his sons as heads of the Boussouma, Béloussa and Yako provinces. He made them veritable monarchs who were united to the Moro Naba by a mere bond of vassalage, as was already the case with the chief of Tenkodogo.

Moulins adds, "As a rule, the chiefs of vassal provinces do not seem to have given much thought to enfranchisement from the Moro Naba's suzerainty, which actually did not weigh heavily upon them. We must come all the way to modern times, to Sanom's reign, to find signs of a struggle between the sovereign and the chiefs of Boussouma and Béloussa.

"On the other hand, the important vassals sometimes resorted to the Moro Naba's support to strengthen their authority within their own provinces. We have just mentioned the expeditions directed against Yako. Tradition has also preserved the memory of a series of battles waged by Dawoéma, eighth successor of Oubry, against the Boussansé of Garango who attempted to free themselves from Tenkodogo Naba."

174 Following this brief glance at the history of the Mossi empire, there remain, or should remain, three questions to investigate.

1. The remote origins of the Mossi proper, the conquering Mossi who came from Dagomba to Tenkodogo and then to Ouagadougou. At the present day, however, these origins are unknown. They might be uncovered by studying the Mossi language and comparing it systematically with the ancient or present tongues of north, east, and west Africa. I do not believe that such a piece of research is forthcoming, however. /464/ The Mossi might also be studied from the standpoint of physical anthropology, in which case two distinct studies ought to be made, one of the chiefs and nobles, another of the bulk of the Mossi population. The results would then be compared with those obtained for other populations of north and west Africa. Like the one previously mentioned, however, this would be a tremendous project which is not likely to be undertaken in the near future.

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

776 considered the wife of a male deity called *Winnam*, *Windé*, or *Naba Zidiwindé*. The true nature of Winnam is not clear. The Mossi say: "Winnam is the sun, and Winnam is God"; he is considered a sun god as well as a supreme deity.
[775] Winnam is venerated but he is not feared, because it is the dead ancestors who chastise evil-doers by affliction or death. When wicked people die they face the wrath of the ancestors in *Keemsélenga*, or land of the ancestors.

The Mossi have several concepts of the spiritual essence or animating prin-
774 ciple of man. First there is the *seega* (pl. *seesé*), an entity found in all living beings; it leaves the body during sleep, and its adventures provide the dreams of men. The seega can be captured during its nocturnal wanderings or in places
[761] where large crowds congregate. If the seega is captured and eaten by a sorcerer, its owner will die. A man's shadow is also called his seega; persons
[822] about to die have no shadows, since their seesé have either been stolen or have left on their own account.

Another principle called the *keema* (pl. *keemsé*) is associated with the dead
775 or with persons about to die. The keema of a dying man wanders around and often frightens people; as soon as he is dead, he is no longer referred to by name but is called the "keema." Keemsé is also the word used for the generalized
[769] ancestors who sanction the behavior of the living and who must be placated if people wish to have enough food, wives, children, and good health. A man's own keemsé take a vital interest in his affairs, in return for which they receive nourishment in the form of the seesé (animals do not have keemsé) of sacrificed animals.

[827] The breath, called *wousem*, is also considered an animating principle by the Mossi and, since it leaves the body through the nose at death, they believe that a man's nose is the first thing to die. It is not clear how the seega is disposed of when the body dies. Some people say it remains forever about the haunts of man; others believe that it goes to a mountain called Plimpikou and disappears into a cavern. Still others believe that the seega becomes the keema and goes to Plimpikou, from whence the keemsé come to visit their descendants. It is difficult to determine whether the Mossi have always been vague about their traditional religious concepts or whether this uncertainty is the result of the influx of such foreign creeds as Islam and Christianity.

175 The first recorded contact between the Mossi and Moslems took place
797 around 1328 when the Yatenga Mossi attacked, burned, and sacked Timbuktu, then held by the Dia dynasty of the Songhoi (Dubois 1896:251). For more than a century afterward, the Mossi pursued a turbulent and aggressive policy in the region of the Niger bend, pushing as far as Gourma, Walata, and Banku (ibid:127). They were finally defeated and routed by Sonni Ali in 1477. In 1499, when Askia the Great (El Hadj Mohammed ben Abou Bekr, usurper of the Songhoi throne from the Sonni dynasty in 1494) returned from his pilgrimage to Mecca, he launched a *jihad* or holy war on the Mossi who had rejected his ultimatum to adopt Islam. Askia defeated the Mossi, "devastated the towns and countryside, took men, women, and children as prisoners, and forcibly converted these captives to Islam" (Dubois 1896:127–128). The

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

pagan Mossi and the Moslem Songhoi fought several other battles until Songhoi power was broken by the Moroccans, who conquered Timbuktu in 1590. 175 797

The Moslems made no further attempt to convert the Mossi by force, but Moslem pressure did not stop; it now came in the peaceful guise of Moslem merchants and Yarsé Moslem refugees from the Mandingo cities such as Timbuktu and Djenne, who received permission from the Mossi rulers to settle in the country. However, judging from the reports of the first Europeans to reach the Mossi, the Moslems lived under many restrictions and were forbidden by the Moro Nabas to recite their prayers in public places (Tauxier 1912:585–586). Despite these restrictions, the Moslems were able to extend their influence through conversion of the cadet sons of the rulers and conversion of at least one ruler of the Ouagadougou Mossi dynasty.

About 1780 Naba Kom, the son of Zombré and a Yarsé Moslem woman, permitted the Yarsé to live in the villages and sent one of them to the Gold Coast for religious instruction. His son, Naba Sagha, was involved in a civil war and replaced some dissident pagan district chiefs with his Moslem sons. The present ruling lineage of Nobéré (where I worked) is descended from Ngado, one of these sons.[3] But although the rulers permitted their younger sons to adopt Islam, they themselves and the heirs to the thrones remained pagan in order to maintain the bonds with the ancestors. The exception to this rule was Doulougou, the grandson of Sagha, who was elected Moro Naba despite being a Moslem. Now the spread of Islam was given new impetus: Yarsé proselyting increased, mosques were built in Ouagadougou and in the villages, and many Koranic schools were founded. But with Doulougou's death the rulers reverted to paganism and Moslem influence declined. Nevertheless, the learned Moslem Imams continued to serve at court and used their knowledge of the outside world for the benefit of the rulers.

The Moslem Mossi showed the greatest hostility to the first Europeans who arrived in the country. The Imam of Yako, under the influence of his Tidjani son (who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca), refused to have any dealings with Europeans. Furthermore, he convinced the Moro Naba that death awaited any ruler who granted an audience to a European. When the French attacked the Mossi in 1896, an Imam from Béré, a former pilgrim, told the ruler to flee and not depend on his ill-equipped soldiers to defeat the gun-bearing invaders. Lamberth reported that the Moslems told the defeated and demoralized Mossi that "as soon as all the blacks become Moslems, the whites will leave" (Tauxier 1912:792).

No one knows how many Moslems were in Ouagadougou when the French arrived. Delafosse (1912, vol. 3:193) records that around the turn of the century there were about 42 Koranic schools with 230 students scattered around the country. Tauxier (1912:793), writing about the same period, states that there were 33 Koranic schools with about 358 students. No Koranic schools were reported for the Nobéré and Manga districts, but I know that there were several in the neighboring district of Béré. In 1926 there were 70 Koranic 175 797 871

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

schools and 4,000 Moslems in Ouagadougou (seven percent of whom were non-Mossi). By 1944 there were about 240 schools and approximately 25,000 Moslems. The last census, 1954, did not record the number of Koranic schools but gave the figure of 60,000 Moslems in the Ouagadougou region.[3] The 4,000 Moslems of Nobéré comprise 42 percent of that district's population. With the exception of one Catholic school master and the Catholic catechist who came to the district during 1956, the population is pagan. It might be relevant to point out that Nobéré has the highest percentage of Moslems in Kombissiri, an administrative unit (a subdivision) which has 152,000 pagans, 23,000 Moslems, 3,000 Catholics, and about 100 Protestants.

As noted above, Islam first came into the Nobéré district with Ngado, who replaced a dissident pagan chief, but Ngado's lineal descendants reverted to paganism until a few years ago when the present district chief became a nominal Moslem. The cadet sons of Ngado did not revert to paganism, and today all the noble sublineages of the district are Moslem. We may note here that one of the main aspects of Islamic proselytization in this district, as elsewhere among the Mossi, has been the conversion of persons who do not hold strategic positions vis-à-vis the ancestors. The present chief is no exception to this rule, because he is only a nominal Moslem. His eldest son is the only one in the family who is not a Moslem—a status which is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain in a growing Moslem population. The chief himself became partially converted to Islam in gratitude to a Moslem Hausa trader who cured his illness. He recites the five daily prayers and observes most of the prescriptions of Islam, but he still drinks European beer, subscribes to many pagan rites and beliefs, and supervises the annual Péléga or sacrifice to the ancestors. This dual allegiance is politically expedient because the chief can function as the head of the Moslem community as well as the traditional head of all the people. He does have occasional difficulty with intolerant Moslems who wish him to become a devout Moslem, and with the traditionalists who claim that today the crops are smaller, the people sicker, and the women barren because of the neglect of the ancestors. However, with the approach of holy days, these differences are resolved in the interest of community harmony.

The chiefs of the villages under the overall command of the district chief are mainly pagan, since they are descended from the district chief replaced by Ngado. Yet they command villages inhabited by the noble Moslem sublineages of the ruling house as well as by commoner lineages. The village chief cannot become a Moslem because he too is responsible for sacrifices to the ancestors, without whose help his people would suffer. He does not take an active part in Moslem festivities, but receives the homage due a chief from the Moslems on these and other occasions. However, most village chiefs show an interest in Moslem affairs, and one of them, the chief of Vooko, built a prayer-circle (*misseri*) for Moslems who came to pay homage.

The pivotal role which the village chief plays in the exchange of wives between Moslems and pagans has led indirectly to the increase of the Moslem population. Before the French conquest he gave the Moslems more wives than

9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957)1960 FA28 Mossi FA28

all the chaos would come a new appreciation for the task of the chief, and a cessation of the grumbling that the chiefs were greedy.

The Mossi interregnum also served another purpose. It gave the electors the opportunity to exhaust and redistribute much of the patrimony of the dead ruler, which was brought to them by his heirs who were trying to obtain the chieftainship through bribery. Sometimes, a candidate's ability to collect a great deal of goods with which to press his suit often revealed to the electors the strength of his following in the district or village, for had he been an unpopular man he would have had to use only his own resources.

The Mossi electors were always concerned with the health and character of a potential chief, and turned down the most promising candidates who were deficient in any of these qualities. For example, when Moro Naba Sanum died in 1890 without leaving a male heir, his younger brother, Bokary Koutou, was the strongest candidate for the *nam*. Yet he was passed over, at first, by the electors because of his reputation as a bandit and a rebel. We know from Captain Binger, a Frenchman who met Bokary in 1888, that this prince was indeed a bandit and a slave raider. But Binger, although deploring Bokary's conduct, exonerated him on the grounds that the Moro Naba had sent him into exile without any means of support. This was true, but the reason that Moro Naba Sanum did so was because Bokary had raised a rebellion against him as an attempt to obtain their father's position. Bokary was forbidden to appear in the capital; but when he heard that his brother Sanum was dead, he took a force of soldiers and hurried to Wagadougou fearing that an attempt would have been made to prevent his election. When he found that his fears were justified, he became desperate and secreted a force of Gurunsi warriors around the elector's meeting place, threatening to kill them if he was not named Moro Naba. They succumbed to his threat and he received the *nam*. During the customary speech in which a new ruler chose his official name, announced his program for the people and the country, or ridiculed his erstwhile competitors, Bokary Koutou said: "A hundred ghosts cannot frighten an elephant (Wobogo)," meaning that he was not afraid of any of his enemies. He thereafter became known as Moro Naba Wobogo, and he chose to live up to his boast when the French arrived and asked him to sign a treaty of protection with them. He refused

9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1960 FA28 Mossi FA28

and chose to fight, and when defeated, fled to the Gold Coast (Ghana). From here he intrigued with the British against the French and even succeeded in having his brother poisoned for accepting the title of Moro Naba. It was only when the British accepted French sovereignty over Mossi country that Bokary accepted his deposition and permanent exile.

Once the traditional electors had chosen one of Bokary's younger relatives, Siguiri as Moro Naba, the Mossi people themselves quietly accepted French rule. Their behavior was in this respect similar to that of many indigenous populations with complex political institutions who had been conquered by the Europeans. In contrast, the neighboring Dogon, Gurunsi, and Lobi, whose political systems were very simple, and who had been constantly raided by the Mossi for slaves, kept on rebelling against French rule, and in some cases shot poisoned arrows at French tax collectors and labor recruiters as late as 1941. The only opposition which they offered the French was in 1910 when an attempt was made to reorganize the Mossi districts for administrative reasons. However, when the French changed their policy of direct administration to a form of indirect rule, the Mossi remained so peaceful that by 1922 there was only one administrator for every 60,000 inhabitants.

Moro Naba Kom who reigned from 1905 to 1942 skillfully preserved the power of the ruling dynasty during a period when the Mossi people were subjected to a rather severe forced labor regime. This was also a period during which the administration deposed chiefs who ran afoul of its wishes or policies. The political ability of this ruler is best exemplified by the order of succession that occurred in the Doulougou district. In 1895 Moro Naba Wobogo had appointed his own son as Doulougou chief in place of Koabga Wedraogo whom he had deposed and killed. However, when Wobogo fled from the French the next year, his son, the Doulougou chief, killed himself because he did not wish to follow his father into exile. The new Moro Naba Siguiri placed a son of the former district chief, Koabga Wodraogo, as chief of Doulougou. This chief died in 1906 and was replaced by a brother. Unfortunately this chief ran afoul of the French, was deposed and placed in "obligatory residence" in another district where he died in 1927. The Moro Naba then elected another son of ex-

9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957)1960 FA28 Mossi FA28

643 Moro Naba Wobogo as chief of Doulougou, but this chief was assas-
636 sinated. Thereafter the Moro Naba placed his own brother as chief
175 of Doulougou district only to have him deposed by the French in 1932
662 for abusing his power. Now the Moro Naba again turned to a descendant of Koabga Wedrago and named him chief, but the French also deposed and jailed this chief for incapacity. Finally in 1935, the Moro Naba named his own son, Etienne Kongo, as chief, and this man was still chief when I left the Mossi in 1957. The interesting feature of this succession is that the Moro Naba confined it to three specific families: his own, that of ex-Moro Naba Wobogo, and that of the ancient chiefly line of Doulougou. In no case did Moro Naba Kom attempt to elevate to chieftainship the son or relative of a man whom the French deposed. He named a chief from another one of the chiefly families, and when a member of this line was deposed, he quickly turned to another one. In this way, the Moro Naba never gave the French any cause for thinking that he disapproved of their action by placing as chief a relative of the man they had deposed. This type of succession was only possible because of the flexibility in the Mossi mode of chiefly succession. Furthermore, the district people readily accepted the chiefs appointed by the Moro Naba because he never deviated from their cultural expectations, or violated the accepted norm of succession.

636 A more serious attempt on the part of the French to influence the
643 traditional political organization of the Mossi came when they tried to enroll the sons of the Moro Naba and those of other chiefs in a special school in order to make these boys adjuncts in their administration. The eldest sons of the Moro Naba and of the officials around Wagadougou were all sent to school because they were well known to the French.
636 However, in the rural districts, the chiefs hesitated to send their eldest
643 sons to school. First of all, they regarded this plan as another form of
186 forced labor from which their sons might never return. And secondly,
662 because they also feared that if these youths did return as educated men, they would have been Christianized, and thereby would have been unable or unwilling to perform the important roles which chiefs had vis-a-vis the ancestors. To palliate the French the chiefs sent their youngest or motherless sons to schools, or in some cases substituted the sons

11: Skinner

FA28 Mossi FA28

175

/For a history of the Mossi of the Upper Volta at the time of the first European contacts and the subsequent conquest of the Mossi by the French, see category 116, pp. 139-153; for a history of the Mossi government during the colonial period of European administration (up to and including the 2nd World War period) see category 116, pp. 154-178; for a history of political changes taking place in Mossi government in the post World War II period, see category 116, pp. 179-203./

The Mossi grow tobacco in fields around their
248 4 INTRODUCTION
249 homesteads, where they also cultivate their most important cash crops, cotton and indigo, which are used in the manufacture and dyeing of cotton cloth.

136 The wild fauna of Mossi country include several species of antelope, deer, monkeys, rabbits, snakes, and wild pigs. Elephants roam the beds of rivers and streams and often destroy cultivated fields, while lions and hyenas distress the people by attacking livestock. The pools and rivers of Mossi country are inhabited by turtles, crocodiles, and various species of scaled and scaleless fish. Chickens, muscovy ducks, and half-domesticated guinea fowl are the most valuable species of birds.

231 The Mossi have long been famous for their splendid donkeys and
[492] horses. Donkeys are sometimes ridden, but they are used primarily as
[439] beasts of burden. Horses are important for military and ceremonial purposes and for export to the tsetse-fly zones to the south. The Mossi raise two main types of cattle: a zebu-like animal in the northern regions and a
[439] dwarf variety in the south. These animals are raised primarily for their milk and for export, and are seldom killed for meat until they are fairly old. Goats and sheep provide the main source of meat. Hog-raising is not wide-
[771] spread, and seems to be declining in importance with the increased ob-
[178] servance of Islamic food taboos, which is on the uprise even among people who are still pagans.

135 The subsoil of Mossi country is not well known, but so far there have been no major discoveries of mineral deposits. The only known gold field
[301] remained unworked in aboriginal times. The Mossi do not like to wear
[325] gold ornaments, preferring jewelry worked from imported copper and silver. The northern Mossi worked their local iron in aboriginal times, but
[439] those in the south obtained this metal from caravan traders.

175 The nineteenth-century reports of Barth and other European travelers
439 indicate that the Mossi conducted a rather extensive foreign trade. At least six caravan routes passed through their territory, and traders such as the
[443] Hausa and Mandingo visited the important Mossi trading centers at Yako, Pouitenga, and Ouagadougou, where they exchanged Saharan and forest products for Mossi livestock and cloth.[8]

101 The Mossi belong to the Voltaic culture area, a name given by Delafosse to the regions drained by the Black, Red, and White Voltas and their tributaries. The area embraces parts of Mali, the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, the Upper Volta, and northern Ghana.[9] It includes a vast congeries of peoples such
[197] as the Dagomba, Mamprusi, Dagari, Birifo, Senufo, Gurmanche, Gurunsi, Lobi, Bobo, Tallensi, Konkomba, Dogon, Somba, Fulse, and Ninisi, all of whom speak languages belonging to the Gur or Moshi-Grunshi group of

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

173 him too firmly entrenched to be deposed. He then returned north to a place called Gourcy in Ouahigouya. There he was joined by his sister Pabre, who brought him the royal amulets of Rialle (Ouedraogo's father), which she is said to have stolen from Koudoumie and which were believed to sanction the power of the Ouagadougou ruler. Koudoumie gathered his army and pursued Pabre in an attempt to recover the amulets, but he met so much opposition at Yako that he returned without them.

The struggle for supremacy between Koudoumie and Yadega led many of the princely descendants of Ouedraogo to carve out their own principalities from their patrimony and declare themselves independent of Ouagadougou. Faced with the dissolution of his realm, Koudoumie dispatched his sons to different parts of the kingdom to halt the process. There came into existence such principalities as Boulsa, Boussouma, Conquizitenga, Mane, Riziam, Tema, and Yako.[18] However, some of these princes joined the ranks of the rebels, who by this time had taken for themselves the title of *Dim*, meaning "submit only to God." The ruler of Ouagadougou later recognized the autonomy of these princes but not their independence from Ouagadougou.[19]

After Koudoumie's death his descendants at Ouagadougou continued to rule and to consolidate their territory. Each ruler resided wherever control of the population was most necessary, and the graves of the first fourteen rulers of the Ouagadougou dynasty are markers along the road to that dynasty's complete domination of the country. It was only during the reign of the fifteenth ruler, Mogho Naba Sana (ca. 1430–1450), that Ouagadougou became the permanent capital of the dynasty. Meanwhile, the northern Mossi, under Yadega (who had claimed the title of Mogho Naba and complete independence from Ouagadougou on the strength of the amulets brought by Pabre), were also extending and consolidating their territory. They had absorbed into the kingdom of Yatenga ("country of Yadega") all the lands in the kingdom of Zandoma, which had belonged to Rawa, the son of Ouedraogo. Under their rulers (the Yatenga Nanamse), these Mossi moved into the bend of the Niger, a region they called Ghanata, and sacked such towns as Djenne, Sarafere, Timbuktu, and Walata.

● 175 The author of *Tarikh es-Sudan*, a seventeenth-century chronicle, describes the attack on Timbuktu by the Mossi ruler, which took place about 1329:

> It was in the reign of one of the princes of [sultan Kankan Moussa's] dynasty that the sultan of the Mossi at the head of a strong army made an expedition against that city. Seized with fright, the people of Mali fled and abandoned the city to its assailants. The Mossi ruler entered the city, and after killing

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

all the people he found there and seizing all the goods he could find, he burned the city and returned to his own country. The peoples of Mali returned afterwards to Timbuktu and remained there for the next hundred years.[20]

The Yatenga Mossi subsequently warred upon and defended themselves against the Songhai, who had tried to force Islam upon them. The Mossi were among the strongest peoples in the Niger bend area when the Moroccans arrived in 1591, and there were no wars between these two groups.

There has been a great deal of discussion among scholars of Sudanese history about the relationship between the Mossi expeditions into the Niger area and the power of early Mossi kingdoms. Marc believes that the Mossi reached their zenith late in the fifteenth century, when they attacked Walata and Timbuktu for the second time. He writes, "It was undoubtedly during this period that they extended their influence over all the territories where their language is spoken at the present day."[21]

On the other hand, Tauxier believes that the Mossi reached their apogee much earlier, toward the end of the fourteenth century. He notes that this was the period when the Mossi were "propelled by a powerful drive of expanding conquest," which carried them to Timbuktu and its neighboring regions.[22] With the recapture of Timbuktu by Mansa Souliman, however, they turned back and firmly established themselves in Gourma and Yange to the east of Ouagadougou, and among non-Mossi populations in Ouahigouya and Ouagadougou. Tauxier believes that this southern drive made the Mossi sufficiently powerful to reinvade the Niger area and thus control a territory extending from Gambaga in the south up to Timbuktu and Djenne in the north. This second period of success came to a close when the Mossi were defeated by Askia the Great of Songhai in 1497, and by Askia Daoud in 1549 and 1561. After these defeats, they not only abandoned their territories north of Ouahigouya but withdrew into their present boundaries. Tauxier concludes that from this time onward, the bonds between the different Mossi kingdoms grew weaker and the power of Ouagadougou waned.

At the same time, the Mossi kingdoms, principalities, and districts developed their internal structure and continued to absorb the Ninisi population. They also welcomed the Moslem Yarse merchants and refugees who settled in their country and adopted most aspects of their culture.[23] These Yarse refugees were joined by Mandingo-Dioula and Soninke Moslem refugees, who entered Mossi country as the result of wars or rebellions in such places as Djenne, Segou, and Timbuktu. The sheltering of these refugees by the Mossi eventually led to a series of wars between them and

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

the Bambara in the mid-eighteenth century.[24] In the course of these wars and up into modern times, many Fulani (Peulh or Fulbe) entered Mossi territory. The circumstances surrounding their first coming are not fully known, but many of them claim to have come originally from Fouta-Djalon and Fouta-Toro. They gained the good will of most of the Mossi rulers and spread throughout the territory.[25] Many of them married Mossi women, giving rise to a new group known as Simili-Mossi, who continued to raise cattle but also practiced agriculture and adopted many of the cultural traits of their hosts.[26]

There are some reports that Europeans had heard about the Mossi exploits at least from the time of King John II of Portugal, who reigned from 1481 to 1495. Marc states that the Portuguese ambassadors to Mali and Timbuktu convinced their King that the Mossi were Christians, and that he attempted to enter into relations with them. According to Barth, these attempts were made as late as 1533.[27] Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing whether the Mossi even knew about the existence of the Portuguese. After this period, there is no evidence of European interest in the Mossi until the end of the nineteenth century. As we shall see in a later chapter, the Mossi received more than their share of attention when the scramble for Africa began.

11: Skinner E-5 (19[illegible]-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

marauding animals. Just twenty years ago, the six villages that lay closest to the river were gradually abandoned and their populations absorbed by other villages. As of 1955, three of these populations were still paying allegiance to their former chiefs—a fact that bears out the Mossi axiom that chiefs govern people rather than land. The three other chiefs had lost control over their followers, who had placed themselves under the protection of the chiefs of their host villages. On occasion, Nobere also lost villages to other districts. One such village, Rissoma, was taken away from Nobere and given to Djiba when one of the Nobere district chiefs had a dispute with the Mogho Naba.

The hub or center of Nobere district, like that of all Mossi districts, was Nab'tenga (also called Nobere Naba Tenga, or Na-tenga), the village of the district chief. This village was rather large and in many respects a replica in miniature of the capital of Ouagadougou. Like most Mossi villages, Nab'tenga was divided into sections, quarters, or neighborhoods called *saghse* (sing. *saka*), which included a number of compounds (*yiya*, sing. *yiri*; or *zughse*, sing. *zuka*). The district chief's compound was called Nab'yiri. He lived there surrounded by his wives, unmarried daughters, younger children, and pages. His older male children lived in separate compounds within the same saka. The saghse of Nab'tenga included Ouidi, the saka of the Ouidi Naba; Balbalse, the saka of the Baloum Naba; Tansoba, the saka of the local war minister (Tansoba or Tampsobo); Baglere, the saka of the chief's serfs; Bendere, the saka of the chief's musicians; Ouedrange, the saka of the chief's grooms; and Pwese, the saka of the guardians of the chief's wives. Scattered among them were the saghse of noble families, smiths, the Moslem Imam, and other persons. The most important market place in the district was located about four hundred yards from the chief's compound.

The number and types of social and ethnic groups within the district and its villages reflected Nobere's history. When the French arrived, the district chief was Kaglere, a descendant of Ngado, who was a son of Mogho Naba Sagha I (ca. 1787–1803). Ngado had been sent to Nobere at the end of the eighteenth century to replace Naba Peka (a descendant of Naba Biligo), who had been deposed and killed by Mogho Naba Sagha during a civil war. The other chiefly descendants of Biligo, however, were not deposed by Ngado; they remained in charge of all but five or six of the major villages in the district. The chiefs of such villages as Ronse, Barkago, Tewarka, and Pinse are *yagense* (descendants) of Naba Biligo. The village called Passintenga was ruled by the descendants of a Busanga from Lenga called Passentre, who allegedly had been given a wife by Biligo. It is not

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

known, however, whether this woman was Biligo's daughter or one of his pughsiudse. The people of Passintenga claimed descent from Biligo's daughter, but the other groups in the district questioned this ancestry. The village called Bourougna had two chiefs. One, the Tang Naba, was descended from a son of a Ouidi Naba of Ouagadougou who had settled in Nobere; the other, the Yang Naba, claimed descent from an aboriginal Ninisi man and woman of Biligo's lineage. The Yang Naba was thus another of Biligo's yagense in the district. The chief of Nimpwe village was a descendant of the aboriginal Ninisi people and was the principal Tengsoba in the district. He had more ritual power than political power, however. The nam of Basbedo village was held by a man descended from Busansi refugees. Living in this village was a man with the honorific title of Soulougre Naba, who claimed descent from the most important Ninisi family who had lived in the district prior to the arrival of Biligo.

Most of the nobles of the local ruling lineage lived either in the saghse of the district villages or in isolated hamlets. Local tradition holds that one of the conditions set by Naba Ngado for allowing Biligo's descendants to remain as village chiefs was the right to settle nineteen of his sons in many of the villages. He allegedly sent *mabissi* (sons of the same mother) to the same village. By so doing, he took advantage of the normal lines of fission that are created after the death of a Mossi father and prevented undue rivalries. Yet there was no driving necessity for him to do so, because there were more villages than chief's sons available. In fact, there are still many villages without nobles in Nobere district. The people of Passintenga, for instance, allegedly refused to have nobles live among them, while the people of Nimpwe allegedly killed by sorcery all the nobles who ever tried to live there. The actual reason for the absence of nobles in these villages may have been that the district chief did not wish to send his sons to villages into which his daughters had married or where there lived earth priests who were thought to be powerful sorcerers. Nobles were often unwelcome, feared, and resisted, because they tended to exploit the village people and to take advantage of the commoners.

The villages of Nobere district, like those of other Mossi districts, were populated in part by refugees and strangers. Several saghse in Togese village were inhabited by Mossi refugees who had fled a district called Guiergo after a fight over the nam of that district. Scattered throughout the district's villages were people of unknown origin called Siamse. The Siamse found in the villages of Tewaka and Nabadogo claimed that their ancestors had "followed" Naba Biligo when he came down from Ouagadougou to found the district. Several saghse in Bourougna village were in-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

required mature rulers, or an uncle may have vanquished a nephew by physical prowess or force of character.

The pretenders to the Mossi nam began to press their claims as soon as propriety allowed. They presented gifts to the Ouidi Naba and to the other ministers in an attempt to sway the issue. The Ouidi Naba finally called a secret council composed of the Gounga Naba, the Larhalle Naba, the Kamsaogho Naba, and the Tansoba, and recited to them the following formula: "The country does not have a chief, and it needs one. Among all the people who wish to be elected [*di nam*, "eat the nam"], it is for you to choose the most worthy."[16] To this the councillors responded: "Naba! You are our superior, and the right to make the choice rests upon you alone." Thus given a free hand, the Ouidi Naba chose the most capable candidate. However, before announcing his choice, he said to the Tansoba, "My heart is heavy because I fear that those persons whose hopes have not been fulfilled will resort to violence to get their way." The Tansoba responded, "That will be against tradition and justice. Do not fear. I am here with my army to see that your decision is respected." Having received the support of the Tansoba, the Ouidi Naba announced his choice to the other councillors. They said to him, "Naba! You have expressed our will, and that of all the people." It is not to be understood from these formulas that the other councillors had no voice in selecting the candidate. They did in fact advise the Ouidi Naba concerning the best candidate, but these formulas emphasized that it was the Ouidi Naba, as prime minister, who was responsible for the choice.

The Ouidi Naba's choice of a new Mogho Naba was kept secret until the successful candidate was summoned for investiture. This occurred on the second night of the late Mogho Naba's funeral ceremony. Toward nightfall, the Ouidi Naba secretly dispatched a messenger to summon the successful candidate. The need for secrecy was demonstrated in 1899, when Boukary Koutou forced the committee to name him Mogho Naba. The circumstances were as follows: Mogho Naba Sanum died without male issue, and all his brothers vied for the nam. One of them, Boukary Koutou, was felt to be ineligible because he had been exiled for leading a civil war against Sanum, but like his brothers he hastened to Ouagadougou. Boukary feared that the electors would not look favorably upon his claim, and when he failed to ascertain their intentions he decided upon a *coup d'état*. He gathered an army composed of his supporters and his Gurunsi slaves, and surrounded the compound in which the electors were gathered. One of the electors discovered the army during a break in the deliberations and reported his findings to the Ouidi Naba. The chief minister and his aides

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

knew that Boukary Koutou was the only person capable of such a conspiracy. Fearing for their lives if they did not nominate him, they immediately sent a messenger to summon him as the successful candidate.[15] Under normal circumstances, however, there was no coercion of the ministers and the nominee was quietly brought to the councillors.

Wearing a pair of trousers and a sheepskin mantle and carrying a spear in each hand, the nominee entered the courtyard of the compound through the women's door.[16] He was preceded by the Samande Nabila, who sprinkled the earth with water. He came up to the councillors and saluted them, and the Ouidi Naba addressed him as follows: "Before your father [brother] died, did he designate you to be his successor?" The nominee replied, "No, Sire! My father has left you free to choose whom you wish, be he a blind man or a leper!" This question was asked three times, and the nominee responded three times. The Ouidi Naba then made the following declaration: "I am giving you the nam of your father and grandfathers. You must try to conduct yourself as they did when they had the nam." The Ouidi Naba then listed the names of the territories over which the ruler had absolute power and authority. The new monarch raised his two spears in the air, made a speech in which he announced three guiding principles by which he vowed to reign, and "named a name," that is, suggested the title by which he wished to be known. For example, Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–57) said in his inaugural speech: "Without rain, there is no life. I will be like rain for the country." He then became known as Mogho Naba Sagha ("Rain"), a rather fitting title for a ruler in a country with uncertain rainfall. The present Mogho Naba stressed in his inaugural speech (in 1957) that he was "solid as a rock." His official title is now Mogho Naba Kougri ("Rock").[17]

The taking of a new name was only the first step in the elaborate process through which a man became Mogho Naba. Next, the Ouidi Naba took the two spears from the new monarch and removed his sheepskin mantle. Then he gave him his new white clothes, which included a pair of trousers, a bonnet, and a sleeveless robe, all made for him by the people of the Sculougou ward in the capital. Next, he was given a cushion made by the people of Baramimi. The Baloum Naba then took the closely guarded namtibo, the sacred amulets of the dynasty, and used them in the preparation of a potion of millet beer mixed with millet-flour water, part of which was poured as a libation to the earth goddess, Tenga.[18] The ruler and the assembled ministers all partook of the potion in a kind of communion. The ministers then shook the ruler's hand, an act thereafter forbidden, and departed for their own compounds. The newly elected

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

The Kombere Naba, as the person who had "eaten the nam" of the district, was infused with some of the power and authority of the Mogho Naba and had the right to use force to maintain this power and authority. He was respected, and people uncovered their heads and removed their slippers in his presence. Unlike the Mogho Naba, the Kombere Naba was permitted to eat with his peers. But whenever he drank the musicians made a roar-like sound with their instruments, and when he sneezed his attendants clapped. These rituals were rigidly adhered to because the Kombere Naba was readily accessible to the populace and might easily have lost their respect if he behaved in an undignified manner. He emphasized his social distance from them by never visiting the market place, and he did not go anywhere without a large entourage.

The Kombere Naba performed ceremonies and duties that were similar to but simpler than those of the Mogho Naba, and he was surrounded by officers bearing the same titles as those in the capital. But, as will be shown later, these officials had fewer and sometimes different duties than the courtiers at Ouagadougou. Some district chiefs had as many pages and wives as the Mogho Naba, but this was as much a result of their own desires as of their popularity with the local people. The death and funeral rites of a district chief were not as elaborate as those of a Mogho Naba. They included the circumambulation of the chief's compound by the principal heir and heiress, the symbolic reign of the Napoko, and the banishment of the Kourita.[41]

Every district chief, whether a Mogho Naba's vassal or a Dim's subordinate, was empowered to bestow the nam on his own subordinates. These might be other district chiefs; but most often they were village chiefs. The circumstances under which a Kombere Naba received the authority to grant the nam to another Kombere Naba were usually complex and sprang from rebellions and dynastic changes. Once granted, this authority was seldom revoked, but the district chief had to report to his immediate superior, a Mogho Naba or Dim, whenever he wished to confer the nam upon another district chief.

In some cases the Mogho Naba invested a district chief himself, and afterward placed him under the control of a neighboring district chief. For example, the chiefs of two districts, Vooko and Nobila, were always installed by the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, but were supervised by the Nobere district chief. This practice dates back to the civil war involving Mogho Naba Sagha I (ca. 1787–1803), in which chiefs of Vooko and Nobere sided with the loser. The Mogho Naba executed the local rebels and placed one of his sons in Nobere. He then divided Vooko into two districts, placing a younger son in the one he called Nobila (little Nobere) and subjecting him

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

to the control of his brother at Nobere. The other district, still called Vooko but now half its former size, was given to a descendant of its deposed ruler. The relationship between these two rulers and the Nobere Naba was that of vassals and lord. They did not stand up in the presence of the Nobere Naba, but knelt or sat on the ground and uncovered their heads in respect to him. The Nobere Naba traditionally appointed the village chiefs in the Vooko and Nobila districts; however, he sometimes granted that right to the two district chiefs. Furthermore, the traditional provincial administrator could not transmit any orders to those two district chiefs without first notifying the Nobere Naba. In their everyday affairs the two chiefs were autonomous, but the Nobere Naba could challenge and countermand all their actions. Actually, he did seem to exercise greater control over Vooko than over Nobila. One may even say that the relationship between the Nobere district chief and the Vooko chief was like that between the Mogho Naba and his district chiefs, and that the relationship between the Nobere Naba and the Nobila Naba was comparable to the one between the Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba. We have seen that the Dimdamba claimed equality with the Mogho Naba because of their alleged descent from a putative common ancestor. The Nobere Naba was actually more closely related to the Nobila Naba than to the Vooko Naba, and his behavior toward them reflected this fact. In both cases, the relationships involved were determined by the concept of joint possession of the nam by the ruling family.

A district chief was not required to notify his superior when he wished to confer the nam upon a village chief. In this choice he was completely autonomous and subject only to tradition. The fact is that on the district and village levels, traditions were more frequently modified in the face of practical political and socio-economic considerations. This occurred primarily because the district chief had closer relations with persons who possessed goods and services or who controlled them directly than did the chiefs on higher levels. Secondly, he was often under great temptation to allow presents or bribes to affect his choice of subordinate chiefs.

When a Tenga Naba died, the district chief permitted control of the village to revert to its Tengsoba. If there was none, the village was "given" to the eldest man among the aboriginal Ninisi lineages or to the eldest member of the ruling lineage segment. However, none of these persons was considered anything but a trustee of the village, and even when the trustee was a potential candidate for the nam, the Mossi did not feel that this man had any advantage over his competitors. Whoever held control of the village was held responsible for its affairs by the district administrator until the new chief was elected.

Competition for chieftainship on this level was very keen because of the

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

[P. 60]

IV

ADMINISTRATION

642 631 [825] [769] The Mossi always looked to their rulers, especially to the Mogho Nanamse, the Dimdamba, and the Kombemba, to determine administrative policies and to pronounce on all relevant issues. All foreigners who requested information were told, "You must talk to the chief."[1] The Mossi believed that men cannot live without chiefs, and insisted that even animals have chiefs. Mossi rulers were therefore expected to ensure internal tranquillity in times of peace and to protect their subjects and territories in times of war. The expectation that they would also provide impartial judgment is best expressed by a dictum of the Ouagadougou people: "The truth is at Ouagadougou." Finally, Mossi chiefs were held responsible for inducing the ancestors to bring health and prosperity to their subjects. To this end, they supervised and participated in rituals to their ancestors and encouraged the people in every territory, district, village, and compound to do likewise. In return, the people paid homage and allegiance to their chiefs and provided them with the goods and services they needed to support the administrative process.

643 631 642 175 The nature of the administrative relationship between the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, the rulers of Yatenga, Fada-N'Gourma, and Tenkodogo, and the autonomous Dimdamba was not clear to the early visitors to Mossi country, and remains a matter of controversy. Two conflicting principles were always at work: seniority with respect to the nam and claims of close descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri on the one hand, and relative political strength or military power on the other. The stronger a ruler, the less he deferred to his lineal seniors. He might even claim a supremacy over them that came close to a claim of seniority. When Barth visited the Sudan in 1853, he was told that the Mossi country was "split into a number of small principalities, almost totally independent of each other, and paying only slight homage to the principality of Woghodogo." Barth reports, however, that the Dim of Boussouma was "probably the most powerful of the Mossi chiefs at the . . . time, especially with regard to cavalry." Similarly,

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

Binger reports that the Mossi were divided into "a number of confederacies, more or less independent of each other, whose chiefs were vassals of Naba Sanum, the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou." He found, nevertheless, that although the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou claimed suzerainty over the Yatenga, he could not grant travelers permission to enter that territory.[2]

Crozat, who visited the Mossi in 1890, just two years after Binger, was told repeatedly that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou had the right to control the destinies of all chiefs who claimed descent from Ouedraogo and Oubri. But he, too, found that the principalities were self-governing and mutually independent, and were united only by the weak bond that attached them all to Ouagadougou. Noting the claims of the people he encountered that Ouagadougou was still supreme, Crozat suggests that "time and circumstances have weakened this sovereignty. The ruler of Ouagadougou is regarded by the other chiefs merely as their senior and the head of their family. They seldom obey him, yet they recognize that in certain cases he has the right to give them orders." Like many Frenchmen who came after him, Crozat concludes, "One will be struck, as I have been, by this political organization in which the waning of the central authority has led to a true feudal system closely reminiscent of a certain period in our own history."[3]

Delafosse tells us that "the authority of the emperor [of Ouagadougou] does not seem to have been ignored within his borders except in very rare instances. The vassal kings, who were brothers, sons, or nephews of the emperor, usually obeyed him. In any case, the emperor did not interfere with the administration [of their territories], and required nothing from them except the payment of taxes and the raising of contingents for any expeditions he might have to organize against outside enemies (the emperors of Mali, Gao, or Segou; Moroccan pashas; etc.). In return, the emperor granted his support to those of his vassals who were unable to command the obedience of their subjects or tributaries."[4]

It appears, then, that although the independent rulers and autonomous princes sometimes recognized the supremacy (if not the seniority) of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, they were relatively free to rule as they wished. As possessors of the nam, they claimed and exercised the right to administer the peoples of their realms. It appears, furthermore, that the rulers of Ouagadougou seldom challenged the independence of their confreres in Yatenga, although the latter often disturbed them. For example, when Yatenga Naba Kango (ca. 1754–89) sacked and burned the Ouagadougou district of Yako for sheltering refugees from a civil war, the Mogho Naba did not come to the aid of the Yako Naba. Nor did he take offense when this chief, in order to regain his seat, was compelled to switch his

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

allegiance to the Yatenga. The situation lasted throughout Kango's reign, "but as soon as he died, the Yako chiefs ceased to pay allegiance to his successors and paid homage, as before, to the court of Ouagadougou."[5] About fifty years later, Yako district was again captured by a Yatenga ruler, Naba Tougouri (ca. 1806–22), who deposed the reigning chief and installed his own. The deposed chief fled to his sovereign at Ouagadougou for aid and safety. He did receive sanctuary and eventually reconquered his principality, but there is no evidence that the Mogho Naba gave him any active support. Similarly, when another Yatenga ruler, Naba Totebaldbo (ca. 1834–50), once more conquered Yako as well as Riziam, another dependency of Ouagadougou, the Mogho Naba took no action. It was only after Totebaldbo's death that Riziam seceded from Yatenga and returned its allegiance to Ouagadougou. Yako did not submit to Ouagadougou's rule until some time later, when it revolted against Totebaldbo's son.[6] Similarly, both Mogho Naba Sanum and Mogho Naba Wobogo had difficulty in controlling a civil war between Yatenga and Yako which they felt would cause European travelers to think ill of the Mossi. During Crozat's visit to Ouagadougou, Mogho Naba Wobogo asked the combatants to cease fighting, but his efforts failed because "Yako would have liked to obey, but Yatenga refused."[7]

The Ouagadougou rulers experienced less difficulty with the weaker Tenkodogo kingdom, which seldom attacked their vassals or territories. Instead, the rulers of Tenkodogo often sought the aid of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou against their enemies or rebellious subjects. For example, when the Busansi subjects of the Tenkodogo Naba rebelled against him in the fifteenth century, Mogho Naba Dawoema of Ouagadougou went to his aid and defeated them.[8] However, when Korongo, the Tenkodogo Naba, asked Mogho Naba Wobogo to help him defeat a contestant for the nam in 1894, the Ouagadougou ruler refused and said he would acknowledge the victor.[9] In this case, personal considerations seem to have dictated the Mogho Naba's reply.

The rulers of Ouagadougou appear to have taken greater interest in the affairs of the Dimdamba. Here again, however, intervention was conditioned by personal considerations, and especially by relative strength. Failure to be prudent in this respect often resulted in disaster. Mogho Naba Doulougou's insistence on punishing Naba Piga (1806–23), a ruler of the Boussouma principality, resulted in his own death. One of Piga's subjects had fled to Ouagadougou to evade punishment, and the Mogho Naba had returned him with the injunction that he should be imprisoned but not killed. Nevertheless, Piga had the prisoner executed. Moreover, he sent a

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

63 643
631
642
628
175

disrespectful message to the Mogho Naba asking that a horse which a Fulani had stolen from him and presented to the ruler be returned. Doulougou sent an army to chastise Piga, who quickly fled and later appealed to the Mogho Naba for pardon. No sooner had this pardon been granted than Piga again offended the Mogho Naba by granting refuge to his wayward son, who had been expelled from Ouagadougou. The Mogho Naba subsequently forgave his son, but he decided to punish the recalcitrant Piga once and for all. Piga fled at the approach of the royal army, but Doulougou, who had accompanied his troops, was wounded by an enemy arrow and died shortly after his return to Ouagadougou.[10]

A later Mogho Naba, Sanum (ca. 1861), fought, defeated, and executed Naba Zande of Boulsa for taxing the Boulsa people so heavily that they rebelled. After Zande was succeeded by his brother Yemde (ca. 1863–72), the Mogho Naba continued to intervene in Boulsa's affairs and eventually had Yemde executed. Yemde's undoing was the result of his inability or unwillingness to implement the Mogho Naba's desire—which was contrary to Mossi custom—to elect a ten-year-old boy to the chieftainship of Koupela district. The Koupela chief's brother ignored his young nephew and seized the nam; Yemde sent an army to depose him, but his men were routed. Suspecting treachery on Yemde's part, Mogho Naba Sanum sent an army to defeat and depose him and to place his father's brother in command of Boulsa. Yemde defeated the Mogho Naba's army. His victory was short-lived, however, because the Mogho Naba sent a larger army and routed his forces. Yemde fled to the territory of the Boussouma Dim and requested asylum. The Boussouma ruler, Ligidi, did not wish to incur the wrath of the Mogho Naba and dispatched Yemde to Ouagadougou. Yemde apparently convinced the Mogho Naba of his loyalty, but he was executed because he had inadvertently violated the rule that no descendant of a Kourita might see a Mogho Naba and live.[11]

Ligidi, in turn, found himself in conflict with the Mogho Naba. After surrendering Yemde to his sovereign, he had proceeded to Boulsa and seized some of the prisoner's property. At first the Mogho Naba paid no attention, but when he had made peace with Yemde's son, Kiba, he ordered Ligidi to return the property. Ligidi refused to do so and consequently became involved in a series of wars against Kiba and the Mogho Naba. Ligidi died of natural causes before peace was restored, leaving a legacy of hostility between Ouagadougou and Boussouma. Either in complicity with the ruling Mogho Naba (Wobogo) or in an attempt to gain his favor, the electors named Ligidi's brother, Kom, to the nam and ignored his son and rightful heir, Venewende. This unfortunate young man had no one to

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

631 turn to, and fled to Wobogo for safety. Wishing to maintain good rela-
642 tions with Kom, the Mogho Naba forced Venewende to return to Bous-
628 souma, but with the injunction that he should not be killed. Nevertheless,
●175 the Boussouma ruler had the young prince executed. The angry Mogho Naba threatened reprisal and declared that "if the Boussouma chief was not careful, it would be too bad for all his people, because they would fare as badly as their chief."[12] He did not have an opportunity to carry out his threats, however, because the French arrived soon afterwards.

Whereas some Mogho Nanamse took an active interest in the affairs of their Dimdamba or even tried to control them, others hesitated to interfere with disobedient or recalcitrant subordinates, especially when they fought and quarreled among themselves. Mogho Naba Oubya did not interfere when a Boussouma ruler, Pougoula (1745–67), bragging that no one in the nation was strong enough to depose him, arrogantly annexed the Ouagadougou province of Pisila and chased its ruler into Yatenga. Pougoula then gave the chieftainship to the fugitive's son, on condition that he should henceforth recognize his sovereignty.[13] On another occasion, a recalcitrant Boussouma Dim called Zabo (ca. 1767–84) defeated and punished the people of the Mane principality for rejecting the ruler he had chosen for them. They insisted that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou had given Zabo the right to express his preference for a certain ruler, but not the right of choice itself. They appealed to Mogho Naba Waraga for help, but he ignored them. It may well be that Waraga was too involved in a war with the recalcitrant Riziam Naba to interfere, but there is no evidence that he ever censured Zabo. Again, Mogho Naba Sanum apparently took no part when Zende (ca. 1862–76), the ruler of Tema principality, and Totoabo, the ruler of Yako, joined forces against the ruler of La in a dispute over an abducted wife.[14] Perhaps, like other Mossi rulers, he did not care to deal with men who fought over women.

The relationship between the Mogho Naba and the Dimdamba, then, apparently varied in accordance with the persons involved and their relative strength. Sometimes they quarreled and fought; sometimes the Mogho Naba remained aloof from the Dimdamba's affairs; and sometimes the Dimdamba obeyed their sovereign and came to his aid. The one aspect of this relationship that seems to stand out, especially when the Dimdamba had no serious grievance, is their reluctance to fight against the Mogho Naba. Even Piga, the most belligerent in a long line of quarrelsome Boussouma rulers, always fled when Mogho Naba Doulougou attacked him, because "he did not wish to oppose his sovereign."[15] As we have seen, Yemde did fight against Mogho Naba Sanum, but he did so mainly be-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

cause he thought Sanum had attacked him unjustly. For such acts of war, the Dimdamba involved usually lost their lives, and in at least one such case a Dim was turned over to the Mogho Naba by another Dim. We have seen that Dimdamba occasionally came to the aid of the Mogho Naba against another Dim.

A question of some importance is whether this relationship between the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou and the rulers of independent kingdoms and autonomous principalities was characteristic of Mossi society or a rather late development. Was warfare the natural concomitant of a system in which the normally powerful Ouagadougou ruler was sometimes too weak to command allegiance from his peers and subordinates? Did the Mogho Naba resort to warfare as the only possible means of exercising his authority when his commands were challenged or ignored? Delafosse states, "Sometimes . . . , especially in very recent times, discord arose between the emperor [of Ouagadougou] and some of his vassal kings: thus Naba Sanum had to fight against the desire for independence of the kings of Boussouma and Boulsa."[16] Delafosse seems to suggest that the Mossi people were undergoing a period of stress when the Europeans arrived, and were faced with significant new administrative problems.

Here Binger appears to support Delafosse's view:

> Ever since he acceded to the throne, [Mogho Naba Sanum] has been compelled to govern the Mossi with unmitigated despotism. His fear of losing power led him to take such severe measures that he was forced to relax them. As soon as his major vassals saw this, they took these concessions as signs of fear and began to conspire secretly against him. Today, the chiefs of Mani, Boussouma, Yako, and Koupela represent forces with which Naba Sanum will have to reckon. . . . Before long, the Mossi empire will break up; the country will organize into confederacies like those of Beledougou and Yatenga.[17]

It is not completely clear, however, whether Binger really understood the intricacies of the Mossi political organization. He lists as "vassals" of the Mogho Naba such territories as Mane, Kaya, Koupela, Bonsa, Boussouma, Djitenga, Boulsa, Dakay, and Doulougou, as though they were all related to Ouagadougou in the same way. In reality, some were autonomous and some were directly dependent on the Ouagadougou ruler. It is possible that at the time of Binger's visit, the relations between the Mogho Naba and his subordinates were so fluid that the outsider had difficulty in understanding them. If this is the case, then the situation in Mossi country had indeed changed when the Europeans came in.

Crozat, who says the Mossi governmental structure was feudal in na-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

645 dom during the interregnum.[23] The latter task was especially suited to a prime minister, since the Mossi regarded the interregnum as the most difficult period in their political life. The Ouidi Naba's administrative tasks were considered so important that he never went to war and was theoretically immune from punishment or execution by the Mogho Naba. This immunity was necessary, because the Mogho Naba had the right to execute anyone who brought him unwelcome news, and often did so. Since the Ouidi Naba announced good news as well as bad, it would have been folly to subject him to this rule. Some reports in the French colonial archives state that the Mogho Naba was expected to follow the Ouidi Naba's advice at all times, and could not veto any of his actions. These reports add, moreover, that if a Ouidi Naba considered a Mogho Naba dangerous for the welfare of the country, he could rightfully compel the ruler to kill himself. According to Lambert, one Ouidi Naba known as Baba forced Mogho Naba Karfo (ca. 1800) to commit suicide. It appears that aside from waging a long and unpopular war against Naba Djighima of Lalle, this Mogho Naba had seized the riches of his wealthy subjects for distribution among the poor. Moreover, he allegedly dispensed justice without making much distinction between nobles and commoners, which so displeased the nobles that they encouraged the Ouidi Naba to put Karfo to death. Baba sent the sovereign a poisoned arrow and a message consisting of a single word: *ki* (die). Karfo allegedly committed suicide that very night.[24]

645 643 [203] [195] [762]

Thus, it appears that under certain conditions the prime minister could impeach his "all-powerful" sovereign. We cannot assume, however, that all prime ministers were sufficiently powerful to control the Mogho Naba. Many Mogho Nanamse limited their Ouidi Naba to merely giving advice on affairs of state and insisted that he concern himself solely with his own province.

The provinces administered by the five ministers were made up of smaller entities or districts. The districts in the provinces of the Ouidi Naba, the Larhalle Naba, and the Gounga Naba were ruled by the sons and other descendants of ancient Mogho Nanamse. The province controlled by the Kamsaogho Naba was more important. His districts were the wealthiest and among the most populous in the nation, and they brought the largest revenues to the Mogho Naba. The reason for this, of course, was that the Kamsaogho Naba was a eunuch and had no heirs; when he died, all his riches reverted to the Mogho Naba. The province controlled by the Baloum Naba was the most difficult to administer. Its districts were ruled by the sons of recent Mogho Nanamse who felt that as holders of the nam they were free to appropriate the goods of the population. The Baloum

634 635 645 [768]

686 634 692 died while he was using it, the owner could not press any claims. However, the borrower was obliged to sell the animal's flesh and give the money to the owner along with the animal's skin as proof of its death. Under no circumstances would a district chief absolve a man from paying the market value of an animal if he failed to return the skin. Such failure would brand him as a thief and involve an additional fine.

685 [674] The Mossi considered theft a major crime. A thief could be killed with impunity if he was caught in the act and in the presence of several witnesses. If these conditions were not met but the man killed was known to have been a thief, the killer was fined several cows. But if he was known to have been a man of good character, the killer ran the risk of being executed. In this way, the Mossi tried to prevent any abuse of an accepted practice. The theft of grain and other foodstuffs was considered especially reprehensible, because it was held to indicate that the thief was so depraved that he would not even grow his own food. During the rule of Naba Kaglere of Nobere district (1888–1906), a man called Yahiya left his own village of Donse and went to a village called Quitenga to steal sweet potatoes. The people of that village caught him in the act and shot him with a poisoned arrow as he made his escape. Yahiya died without revealing the source of his wound, and his babissi, suspecting foul play, asked Kaglere to investigate. When the Quitenga people learned of the investigation, they went forward voluntarily and reported the circumstances under which they had wounded Yahiya. Kaglere absolved them of all guilt and told the Donse people that Yahiya had deserved to die, not only because he had stolen food (which he might have received if he had asked for it), but because sweet potatoes were the easiest vegetable to cultivate.

685 [682] [696] A thief who was too clever to be caught in the act but who was apprehended afterwards was treated quite harshly by the Mossi court. Here, the penalty of double indemnity was often applied. A man who was brought to court for stealing a chicken or guinea hen was fined a goat or a sheep. Hence the Mossi proverb "Zou noaga ronda bouga"—"He who steals a chicken repays a goat." The thief who stole one cow had to return several. If a thief could not pay the fine, he was placed in stocks until his relatives paid for him. If they refused to do so, the chief's retainers seized their property, sold it, and made restitution. This often compelled the family of a recidivous thief to make him commit suicide. If the family would not resort to this, the district chief had the man seized and clubbed to death.[7] Sometimes the chief sent recidivists to the Mogho Naba, who sent them to a village called Teemetenga to be made into eunuchs.[8]

685 [762] [634] [565] [599] The Mossi seem to have made a distinction between theft and pillage—

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

[P.93]

VI

WARFARE

The Mossi were proud of their warrior tradition, which had earned them their several kingdoms, principalities, and districts. Even the least district chief had stories about the wars in which his ancestors had wrested their territories from aboriginal populations. These traditions of conquest legitimized to a large extent the power of the Mossi kings and chiefs, who never hesitated to use force in order to obtain tribute, to maintain their rule, and to enforce their authority. The Mossi value fighting ability so highly that even today, when fighting is no longer necessary, most Mossi males in the rural areas carry sticks and other weapons on their shoulders as symbols of manhood. In their view, every man should know how to fight and should be able to defend his village, his district, and his kingdom.

According to tradition, the northward thrust of the Mossi warriors during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries carried them into the region of the Niger River bend. Here, around A.D. 1329, the Yatenga Mossi attacked and sacked the town of Timbuktu, which belongs to the Mali. When Mali was on the decline during the early fifteenth century, the Mossi again attacked its towns. According to the *Tarikh es-Sudan*, when the Mali ruler appointed Amin-ben-Ahmad jurisconsul of Timbuktu,

> the sultan of the Mossi led an expedition against Benka. The population of that region went out to engage the enemy, and at that time left others sitting around El Hadj. He pronounced certain words on the millet which was being served and asked those around him to eat of it. All of them ate except the son-in-law of El Hadj, who did not because he was related to him. "Now go and fight," said the holy man, "and you will have nothing to fear from the weapons of the enemy." All, in effect, returned safe and sound, and only those persons who did not eat the millet died in the battle. The king of the Mossi was routed, and his troops were chased without having seized anything from the people of Benka. All this thanks to the protection of the blessed person.[1]

Later, the Mossi attacked towns of the Songhai empire whenever they felt strong enough, only to be driven away later by a stronger adversary. Sa'di describes a Mossi incursion into the Songhai empire as follows:

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

648 175 Sonni-Ali entered Kabara in the year 882 after the Hegira (1477); and it was during the course of the same year that the king of the Mossi entered Sama. In 884 (1479) Sonni-Ali was at Tosoko. . . .

During the month of Jumada I of that year (July 9 to August 8, 1480), the king of the Mossi entered Biro [the Songhai name for Walata] and did not leave until Jumada II (August 8 to September 7, 1480). The siege lasted one month, and during that time he demanded a woman from the inhabitants. . . . After the siege the Mossi king gave battle to the inhabitants of Biro, vanquished them, and took them and their families into captivity. But, as he was returning to his country with his booty, the inhabitants of Biro followed and fought him, and freed their families. Omar-ben-Mohammed-Nadi, who was at Biro at this time, distinguished himself by his valor and ardor during the battle; for he was the first warrior to attack the Mossi king and thus force him to give up the families which had been captured.[2]

A few years later, the Mossi again invaded the area, this time making war on Sonni-Ali himself. The chronicler writes:

Then the prince Sonni-Ali undertook the task of digging a canal leading from Ras-el-Ma to Biro. He was devoting all his effort and a great deal of energy to this task when word reached him that the king of the Mossi had decided to make war on him, and was then leading the attack at the head of his troops. Sonni-Ali was at a place called Chan-Fenech when he heard this news, and he stopped work on the canal right there. God spared the inhabitants of Biro the misfortune which threatened them; for Sonni-Ali, going out to meet the king of the Mossi, made contact with him at a place called Djiniki-To'oi, situated near the town of Kobi behind the river. The battle took place there, and the victorious Sonni-Ali put the Mossi king to flight, and pursued him into his own country. That battle took place in the year 888 (1483).[3]

This battle seems to have represented the high point in the northern expansion of the Mossi, because the next reference to them in the *Tarikh es-Sudan* tells of Askia-El-Hadj-Mohammed's holy war against them. This man, who had usurped the throne from Sonni-Ali's heir, made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and when he returned he decided to convert the pagan masses of the Sudan to Islam:

During the year 903 (August 1497 to August 1498), he undertook an expedition against Na'asira, the king of the Mossi. He took with him the mallam, Mour-Salih-Djaaura, inviting him to give the necessary indications so that the expedition would be a veritable holy war made in the name of God. Mour did not refuse this request, and explained to the prince all the rules relative to the holy war. The prince of the faithful, Askia-Mohammed, then asked the mallam to be his envoy to the Mossi king. The learned holy man accepted this mission; he went to the country of the Mossi and delivered the letter of his master which called upon the king to embrace Islam. Before [787] replying, the Mossi ruler declared that he wished first of all to consult his

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

ancestors who were in the other world. Accompanied by his ministers, he went to the temple of the idol of the country. The learned holy man went there also, in order to see how one went about consulting the dead. They began by making the customary offerings; then a very old man appeared. At his appearance everyone prostrated himself and then the king announced the object of his visit. Calling upon the names of the ancestors, the old man said: "I will never agree to this step for you. On the contrary, you must fight until you or they die to the last man."

Then Na'asira replied to the mallam: "Return to your master and tell him that between us there will be only war and combat." Remaining alone in the temple with the personage who appeared in the form of an old man, the mallam questioned him in these words: "In the name of God Almighty I ask you to declare who you are." "I am Iblis [Satan]," replied the deceiving old man; "I have led them astray so that they will all die in a state of unbelief."

Mour returned to prince Askia-El-Hadj-Mohammed and reported all which had come to pass. "Now," he added, "your duty is to fight them." Straightway he launched his war against them, killed a number of their men, devastated their fields, plundered their habitations, and took their children into captivity. All of the men and women who were taken away as captives were made the object of divine benediction [converted to Islam]. In the entire country, no other expedition outside of this one had the character of a holy war made in the name of God.[6]

The rulers of the Songhai appear to have kept up their attacks on the Mossi during the following hundred years. One of them, Askia Daoud, launched an expedition against the Mossi in 1549 to celebrate his accession to the throne. He attacked and defeated them again in 1561 while on his way to attack Bornou, and their ruler "abandoned the country with all his troops."[6] After this and several other crushing defeats, the Mossi refrained from attacking Songhai territory. Their ardor for external adventures apparently cooled after this period, and there are no reports of their fighting anyone else except the Bambara of Segou in the eighteenth century.[6] Of course, Mossi chiefs made local forays among smaller neighboring groups such as the Busansi, Gurunsi, and Samogo, but only to catch slaves.

During the nineteenth century—a rather chaotic period in the western Sudan—the Mossi appear to have been immune from outside attacks. Crozat, who visited them in 1890, states: "From the very first, in Mossi country, one feels that one has entered a new land, more peaceful, richer, and more populous [than other African countries he had visited]. . . . The people one meets on the roads are workers on their way to the fields, or are carrying wares to the neighboring market. They are not like the Songhai and the Bobo, who always carry bows on their shoulders."[7] The immunity of the Mossi from attack by such intrepid nineteenth-century

1-1: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

warriors as El Hadj Omar and Samory Touré surprised and puzzled many of their early visitors. Binger explains it as follows:

> Thanks to the primitive tribes that surrounded them like a rampart, the Mossi were spared the incursions of their powerful neighbors. This immunity cannot last much longer, because [Mogho Naba] Sanum is weak, has little spirit, and is badly counseled.[8]

Binger was partly correct in attributing the immunity of the Mossi to the presence of weaker groups on their borders. To the military adventurers of the period, the Mossi must have appeared invulnerable when compared to their weaker neighbors. Nevertheless, the Mossi declare that it was their vigilance and willingness to fight that prevented Samory Touré, among others, from invading their country.[9] They claim to have captured and executed nine of the ten spies he sent to survey their territory. The one spy who returned allegedly told Samory Touré that the Mossi were too strong to be attacked, because they banded together against all outsiders.

Crozat attributes the Mossi freedom from attack to miraculous and magical factors:

> There is widespread belief in surrounding territories that Mossi country is inviolable. Alone amid the troubled populations that surround it, it enjoys relative peace. It owes this to the very special protection of a deity, and also to the virtues of the special talismans owned by the ruler of Ouagadougou. The terror inspired by these charms is such that some years ago the leader of Gadiari's column suffered a mass desertion of his men when he tried to lead them to the conquest of Mossi country. He himself was killed, perhaps by his own *sofas* [soldiers]. This case cannot be expected to undermine belief in these presumptuous charms.[10]

This statement, like Binger's, contains an element of truth, but not in the way that Crozat believed. The Ouagadougou kingdom did have a series of ritual pacts with neighboring Mossi and non-Mossi groups. Crozat found that Mogho Naba Sanum was on "good terms" with the people of Fada-N'Gourma. He tells us that this friendship was maintained by a "curious custom" whereby the Ouagadougou ruler sent wives, captives, and horses from his predecessor's estate to the ruler of the Gurmanche.[11] Similarly, Pinchon, a British officer stationed in the Gold Coast at the beginning of the century, reports that there existed an ancient pact between the Mossi and the Mamprusi. This pact kept the ruler of each country from attacking the other on pain of death by the ancestors. Like the pact between the Mossi and the Gurmanche, this agreement was sanctioned by an annual gift of a horse, slaves, and cloth from the Mossi to the Mamprusi. Pinchon speculates that it was the existence of this pact that induced the Mamprusi

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

ruler to grant asylum to Mogho Naba Wobogo in 1897. He adds that it was probably the injunction in the pact that they should never meet which prevented the ruler from personally receiving Wobogo.[13]

A ritual pact also bound the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou to the ruler of Dagomba. He sent him goods from the estate of the previous Mogho Naba as well as gifts for yearly sacrifices on the grave of Nyennega, the Mossi progenitrix. There are reports that the Ouagadougou ruler also exchanged annual presents with the Ashanti ruler, but it is not known whether these were courtesy gifts or goods sanctioning ritual pacts.

The ritual pacts among Mossi kingdoms and between them and their neighbors appear to have derived from actual or putative kinship ties. This seems to be supported not only by the traditions of the Mossi but also by those of the surrounding peoples. Whatever their origin, these pacts seem to have afforded their beneficiaries a remarkable degree of freedom from external aggression. It is possible that the Mossi and their neighbors really believed in the efficacy of supernatural sanctions, for purposes of mutual protection. But one suspects that it was the relative weakness of these various groups that caused them to rely on supernatural agencies rather than military might for protection. As will be pointed out below, the Mossi (and probably all of their important neighbors) had considerable difficulty in building and maintaining a fighting force sufficiently large to wage protracted or large-scale wars against foreign groups.

The Mossi kingdoms seldom fought among themselves, although their leaders quarreled over status and committed aggression against each other's territories. For example, the Ouagadougou rulers, who claimed suzerainty over Yatenga, often tried to impose their will on that kingdom. Yet, although they were usually rebuffed by the Yatenga Naba, they never tried to resolve the issue by force of arms. In fact, even when a Yatenga ruler appears to have given the Mogho Naba just cause for war, little fighting actually took place. Several times the Yatenga rulers seized such principalities as Riziam and Yako, which were dependent on Ouagadougou, but in no case did the Ouagadougou rulers wage war against them. In 1890, Crozat witnessed Mogho Naba Wobogo's attempt to stop a war between Yatenga and Yako. The Yako people wanted to obey their sovereign and stop the war, but the Yatenga monarch refused to do so.[14]

Crozat attributes the ineffectiveness of the Mogho Naba's authority over brother kingdoms to the fact that he had no standing army with which to enforce his rule. While relative strength may have been and probably was the main reason for the Mogho Naba's lack of aggressiveness, the ritual pact that prevented the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou from meeting the

628 642 643 175 [648]

Yatenga Naba (and other rulers) or treading on his territory should not be overlooked. The suggestion that force was not the only consideration was lent force by later events. The French conquest later reduced the rulers of both Ouagadougou and Yatenga to impotence and obviated war between them, yet they did not meet until 1946—some fifty years after the conquest. They met then only because they had to represent their subjects at a meeting to plan the restoration of the Upper Volta and reunite all the descendants of Oubri and Ouedraogo into one territory.

Relative strength obviously played an important part in determining whether one Mossi kingdom interfered in the internal affairs of another. For example, when a Tenkodogo ruler asked a Mogho Naba to help him suppress Busansi subjects who had rebelled, the Mogho Naba readily complied.[14] But when a fratricidal struggle over the nam broke out in Tenkodogo in 1894, the Mogho Naba decided not to intervene even though he was asked to do so.[15]

628 643 669 175

The central governments of the various kingdoms found it necessary to wage war against their subordinate territories at regular intervals. In the Ouagadougou kingdom, most of these wars seem to have been administrative actions against a prince or district chief who had contravened an order from the Mogho Naba or refused to pay tribute. The Dimdamba were the Mogho Naba's most rebellious subordinates, and it was against them that he fought most of his wars. Characteristic of these wars was the series between Naba Ligidi (1866–90), Dim of Boussouma province, and Mogho Naba Sanum.[16] Ligidi had seized and turned over to the Mogho Naba the recalcitrant Naba Yemde, then Dim of Boulsa, and confiscated the rebel's property. Later on, when the Mogho Naba had made peace with Yemde's son, Naba Kiba, he asked Ligidi to surrender the seized property. Ligidi refused to do so, and the angry Mogho Naba sent the royal army into his territory. The army sacked and burned several villages and retreated. Ligidi's forces skirmished with the rear guard but abandoned pursuit near the Ouagadougou border.

Ligidi took his revenge by helping a district chief who had rebelled against Naba Kiba. While he was thus engaged, the royal army again attacked and defeated him. Four days later, it reinvaded Boussouma, engaged Ligidi's forces at a place called Goudri, and won a brilliant victory. Despite Ligidi's furious counter-attacks, the army captured his capital, Ouayougya. The ruler's army finally returned to Ouagadougou, satisfied that Ligidi was thoroughly beaten. But the Mogho Naba had underestimated Ligidi's tenacity. For the next ten years, this Dim waged war against his fellow Dimdamba. The Mogho Naba finally grew tired of his depreda-

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

tions and launched another expedition against Ouayougya. The expedition failed because of a lack of water, and the army was forced to return to Ouagadougou. The war would have continued had not both Mogho Naba Sanum and Ligidi died in 1890.

It appears that the Mogho Naba tolerated fighting among his immediate subordinates, and seldom intervened in local wars unless one of the combatants openly flouted his authority. For example, when the autonomous principality of Riziam attempted to wrest control of Salmetenga district from Boussouma province, Mogho Naba Doulougou did not intervene. He knew that Salmetenga owed allegiance to Boussouma, but was perfectly willing to allow its ruler to transfer allegiance to Riziam. When Boussouma was on the brink of defeat, the Salmetenga Naba fled to Ouagadougou to seek asylum. The Mogho Naba sent him back to Naba Piga, the Boussouma Dim, with the request that he be allowed to live. Piga was so angry with the chief that he ignored the Mogho Naba's request and executed him. This incurred the wrath of Mogho Naba Doulougou, and he sent an army to attack Piga. Fortunately for this disobedient Dim, the Mogho Naba died and the attack was called off.[17]

The reaction of Mogho Naba Koutou to fighting among his subordinates was more typical. He did not interfere in a long series of battles between the principalities of Riziam and Mane which culminated in 1866 when the Riziam people seized, imprisoned, and executed several Mane merchants who had gone to buy salt in Timbuktu. Mane appealed to its brother province of Boussouma for aid, and Riziam appealed to a Fulani chieftain for reinforcements. Before a battle could ensue, however, the Boussouma Dim, Naba Siguiri, died after drinking some millet beer, and the fighting was called off. Naba Kom of Mane then went off alone with his army, defeated the Fulani, and killed their chief, Sekki. When Ligidi (the chief mentioned above) succeeded his father, Naba Siguiri, he elected to continue the war against Riziam with the help of the Mane army, but the battle was inconclusive. The stalemate did not satisfy the bellicose Ligidi, who attacked Riziam once more in 1871, burning villages and seizing property. The Riziam people finally rallied and halted him. They ambushed his soldiers when they tried to retreat, and harried them so thoroughly that Ligidi had to call off the war when slaughter and thirst decimated his ranks.[18]

Similarly, Mogho Naba Sanum did not interfere when one of his own district chiefs, the Salogho Naba, was attacked and defeated by the ruler of Tema principality. Nor did he enter the fray when another of his district chiefs was attacked and defeated by the Boulsa Dim. The fighting in both

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

cases was over women. The Tema Dim successfully defended his principality against a Zittenga district chief who not only had the effrontery to demand the return of a wife who had fled into Tema but also invaded the principality when she failed to return.[19] The Boulsa Dim attacked and defeated the Salogho Naba when he refused to repatriate a man and woman convicted of adultery who had fled into his district. It is possible that in each case the Mogho Naba refused to become involved in a squabble over women, but it is more likely that he refrained from participating in a local war that did not threaten the security of the entire country.

Many Dimdamba made it a practice to help each other in wars against common enemies. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Naba Zende of Tema and Naba Totoabo of Yako joined in a war against Naba Sebogo of La when Sebogo refused to repatriate one of Totoabo's wives, who had fled into his territory. The two victorious allies burned villages in La and forced Sebogo to flee for his life. They searched for the woman, but she was never found. The successors of the three rulers remained embittered by this war and eventually renewed the fighting. On this occasion, Naba Tanga of Tema and Naba Sagha of Yako fought against Naba Kombase of La. But this time Yako and Tema were unable to defeat La and had to withdraw. There is no evidence that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou took any part in these wars.[20]

The Mogho Naba appears to have taken a greater interest in wars between his Dimdamba and non-Mossi populations, and to have profited by them occasionally. When the followers of a Fulani chief named Karfo carried off some cattle belonging to the Boussouma people, the Boussouma Dim, Naba Siguiri, threatened war if the animals were not returned. Karfo not only refused to surrender the cattle but insulted Siguiri in his reply. Siguiri marched against the Fulani, killed Karfo, seized all the cattle he could find, and sent some of the "most beautiful animals" to Mogho Naba Koutou.[21]

Although the Mogho Naba tolerated wars among his Dimdamba, he apparently forbade the district chiefs under his direct command to fight among themselves. As we saw in Chapter IV, some such fighting did take place, but the Mogho Naba seems to have ignored it in most cases because of its relative unimportance. The Mossi, on the other hand, magnified this local fighting, which they called *tengkom* ("civil war"), and which consisted of mere skirmishes between villages or neighboring districts, with few casualties. In fact, the Gounga Naba once stopped a war between districts after only nineteen persons had died. But as a rule, districts seldom if ever fought among themselves. The actual combatants were villagers

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

who fought the villagers of other districts over stray livestock, stolen goods, and runaway women, in that order of frequency.

The main reason for these inter-village wars was the lack of local mechanisms (aside from meetings of district chiefs) to deal with problems between villagers of different districts. If the district chiefs refused to meet, they could either refer the matter to the provincial level or allow the villages to resolve the problem among themselves. Many district chiefs preferred the latter course because it saved them from interference by the authorities in the capital. Besides, these problems were usually unimportant and did not pit one entire district against another. People of different districts were often bound to each other by familial and ritual ties, and did not like to fight against relatives. Only when the potential combatants were unrelated or all attempts at reconciliation failed would the people of a village (and occasionally of a district) band together, either secretly without their chiefs or under their chiefs, and go to war. In such cases, persons who had relatives in the enemy villages often remained at home.

The inhabitants of Mossi districts did band together eagerly under their chiefs to participate in slave-raiding expeditions into non-Mossi territories. This type of warfare seems to have been fairly common. Ruelle writes, "Before our [French] occupation, warfare was the chief preoccupation of the chiefs. Moreover, expeditions into Gurunsi country had as their goal pillage and the procurement of slaves for sale."[22] Similarly, Mangin states, "The Gurunsi and Busansi were frequently raided with the sole intent of obtaining slaves."[23] Binger gives the following description of a Mossi slave-catching expedition and the subsequent disposal of the slaves:

> During my second stay at Banema, Boukary [later Mogho Naba Wobogo], knowing my aversion to pillage and slavery and fearing to displease me, sent off two expeditions during the night without warning me—one to Nabouli, and the other towards the south to Baouer'a. By six o'clock in the morning of the following day, the returning horsemen were heralded by gunshots. Soon afterwards, a line of slaves of both sexes appeared, tied to each other by a cord slung around their necks. The expedition to Nabouli brought back seventeen slaves; that to Baouer'a brought only five, along with an ass laden with salt and a little cotton. As soon as these unfortunate people arrived, they were given water to drink, and mallets were used to remove the rings and copper bracelets which they wore on their arms and legs. Then they were classified into three categories:
>
> 1. The men formed a lot destined for immediate sale for fear that they should run away. They were led forthwith to Sakhaboutenga, to be exchanged against sorghum for the horses, millet for the personnel, and gunpowder.
> 2. A second lot, composed of women, was kept as a reserve to trade for horses.

3. Finally, a third lot, composed of young girls and young boys, was distributed among the warriors and put into their charge. The boys will be employed until further notice as grooms to the warriors; later on, those who prove themselves useful and docile will be kept. The others will be sold at the first opportunity. The girls will be given in marriage to warriors who distinguish themselves.[24]

The military campaigns of the Mossi, in contrast to their slave-raiding expeditions, appear to have been well organized. When the Mogho Naba felt that a war was necessary, he summoned his five provincial ministers and the Tansoba to a parley. If war was decided upon, the Tansoba was given full charge of all operations. This man, chosen from a hereditary clan of warriors who lived in a village called Tansob'tenga in Sapone district, was listed among the Mogho Naba's courtiers but seldom appeared at court unless war was imminent. His duties as chief warrior were considered so dangerous that he constantly sought out religious practitioners for supernatural aid. Nevertheless, a war minister who was good and brave was not expected to live very long. If he did live to become gray-haired, the other courtiers made fun of him by pretending that his graying head could only be the result of his having carried a sheep captured in warfare on his head as a present to the ruler.

Once given a mandate for war, the Tansoba collected his magico-religious apparatus and prepared the requisite sacrifices. He then asked the provincial ministers to notify the district chiefs to assemble with their warriors under the leadership of the local Tansobadamba, who were often members of the Tansoba clan. When the district chiefs received this notice, they beat their *zongagondo* (war drums), and the local administrators sent orders for men to the village chiefs. The village chiefs, in turn, beat their war drums to summon their noble cavalrymen and commoner foot soldiers, who came armed with bows and arrows, spears, swords, and clubs, with or without iron tips. The tips of the sharp weapons were often covered with a vegetable poison derived from a shrub of the Strophanthus species. Some of the men also carried guns after firearms were introduced among the Mossi from the desert region and from the coast. Many carried rawhide shields.

As soon as the village contingents had assembled and had gathered their provisions, they marched to the district centers. Then they proceeded either to the place of battle or to Ouagadougou. In the latter case, they became part of the royal army and were joined by the forces of those princes who were prepared to honor their obligation to the Mogho Naba. For example, when the French invaded Ouagadougou in 1896, the Boulsa Dim sent his prime minister "at the head of an army to aid Mogho Naba

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

the Niger River area to the Gold Coast and Togoland. Important stops were made at such Mossi centers as Ouagadougou, Bere, Dakay, La, Mane, Yako, and Koupela.[7] At Dori, northwest of Ouagadougou, Barth found Mossi with "their fine donkeys, which are greatly sought after." He adds that in addition,

> the people of Mossi supply this market with gabaga, or "tari" [cotton bands], as Arabs near Timbuktu call them, cotton being extremely cheap in their country, so that in the great market places of that country, especially in Kulfela [Koupela, but really at Poitenga a few miles away], an indigo-colored shirt is not worth more than from 700 to 800 [cowry] shells. . . . Besides salt, cotton strips, dyed cloth, kola nuts, corn, and asses, some copper manufactured chiefly into large drinking-vessels is also brought into the market by the people of Mossi. However, I do not think they manufacture the copper vessels themselves, but bring them from Ashanti.[8]

Dubois, one of the early visitors to Timbuktu, tells us that he saw Mossi men carrying on their traditional trade in that city. Mossi traders dealt in such diverse commodities as millet, rice, manioc, peanuts, honey, kola nuts, peppers, dried onions, tobacco, dried fish, soap, iron, antimony, lead, cotton bands, straw hats, mats, jars, pots, and calabashes. They traded these articles for needles, mirrors, beads, coral, amber, tea, coffee, perfumes, carpets, fezzes, tailored robes, and salt. What impressed Dubois most was that while the merchants from Bamako, Djenne, Sansanding, and Touat enjoyed themselves at Timbuktu, "the great town of pleasures with the freest morals in the Sudan," and spent a great deal of money in gifts to beautiful women, "the Mossi did not waste their money, and left as soon as they had finished their business."[9] On the way south, Mossi and other caravaneers picked up goods from the Yatenga and other northern Ouagadougou provinces before stopping at the capital and then proceeding to the forest regions.

It is impossible to determine the exact volume of caravan trade that passed through Mossi country, and the amount of revenue it brought to the Mossi rulers. We can get some idea of this trade, however, by examining the customs reports on goods crossing the border between Mossi country and the northern territories of the Gold Coast in the few years just following European conquest.

The official figures for 1901 and 1903 are as follows:[10]

Year	Horses	Head of Cattle	Sheep and Goats	Loaded Donkeys	Bales of Cotton Cloth
1901.....	126	3,111	18,181	2,095	236
1903.....	196	6,624	30,392	4,294	269

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

Naba Baongo (ca. 1800–30) decided that it was more profitable to sell them.[16] Subsequent rulers, especially the two Mogho Nanamse who ruled just prior to the French conquest, sold most of their captives to passing caravans or in special sections of the larger markets. When other persons sold slaves in the market, the Raga Naba collected some 1,000 cowries on each transaction—the largest tax on any market commodity.

The Mossi rulers seem to have benefited even more from the sale of eunuchs, for they had a monopoly over them. The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou sent some captured slaves and all recidivous thieves to Teemetenga village in Koubri district, some 13 miles south of the capital, to be operated upon.[17] So successful were the Mossi surgeons that—in contrast to specialists in other areas, who lost nine lives for every successful castration—the mortality among the Mossi was only one out of ten.[18] Some of the eunuchs furnished by the Mossi were sold as far away as Constantinople, a fact which surprised the French ambassador to Turkey who saw them there in 1900.[19]

In addition to slaves and eunuchs, the Mogho Naba kept a large number of bondsmen to provide services for him. One group, the Dapore, lived in a ward of the capital called Dapoya, and had a chief, the Dapore Naba, who was himself a Dapore. The origin of these people is obscure, but they seem to have been the children of foreign captives who were brought to Ouagadougou and placed in the ruler's service. Some of them even claimed that their ancestors had come to Ouagadougou voluntarily and had placed themselves under the care and protection of the ruler. This seems unlikely, however, since the status of these people resembles that of persons captured by Sudanese rulers and installed in special wards as serfs.[20] Some of the Dapore lived in villages of their own and cultivated fields for the Mogho Naba. Others lived in a ward of Ouagadougou, served in the palace household, and provided the royal executioners. Some were selected to serve as palace eunuchs, and placed under the charge of the Kamsaogho Naba. The Dapore were hardly ever sold unless they were convicted criminals. The Mogho Naba and his chiefs refrained from selling serfs or captives who had been born in Mossi country. However, they often claimed the sons and daughters of these people as pages or pughsiudse.

The Baglere made up the second group of bondsmen providing services for the Mogho Naba. They, too, lived in a special ward and were headed by the Baglere Naba, one of their own people. Their origin is also obscure: some of them claimed to be descended from Fulani slaves who had run away from their masters and sought asylum in Mossi country; others believed that they were the descendants of foreign captives. The Baglere

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

long been famous. The former are sometimes ridden but are used primarily as beasts of burden. Horses were and are still important for military and ceremonial purposes and for external trade to other areas.

The Mossi have never excelled in metalworking. The people in the northern part of the country have worked indigenous ores since aboriginal times. Those in the south get iron mainly from traders and caravans. The other metals which the Mossi smiths manufacture into tools and ornaments are also obtained from traders.

TRADE IN HISTORICAL TIMES

The geographic position of Mossi country has much to do with its being an important trade and market center. The country itself has always produced grain, cotton and livestock for export. And for several centuries caravans have passed through this region carrying Sudanese and Saharan products to the forest zones to the south, and carrying forest products back to the arid north. The beginning of this trade is lost in the dim past, but it safe to say that it developed shortly after or along with the founding of Timbuktu about 1100 A.D. The Mossi themselves were not definitely linked to this important *entrepot* until they raided it in 1328, but we can assume that they had been trading there for some time before that event took place. Similarly, we have no record of when the Mossi began trading with the forest zones, but we can also assume that this trade began around the same period or even before.

Our first evidence of Mossi trade and commerce comes from Europeans who were themselves interested in conducting their own trading activities with the peoples in the Bend of the Niger. Bowditch, an Englishman who had journeyed to Ashanti to sign a treaty facilitating the reopening of a profitable trade with the coast, wangled the first important piece of information about the Mossi from his reluctant hosts:

> Five journies from Yngwa is Mosee, a more warlike but less visited kingdom: it consists of many states, but the superior monarch is named Billa, and the capital Kookoopella. I place it to the N.W. because its merchants pass by Yngwa; they do not cross the Karhalla [White Volta] nor any river which is not fordable. (Bowditch 1819 : 180)

This information is not strictly correct since Koupela was not the capital of any of the Mossi kingdoms, but Bowditch's informant had probably heard of Koupela because it was the largest political entity near the large caravan center at Pouitenga.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

Dupuis, who replaced Bowditch in Kumasi in 1817, obtained surprisingly good data on trade relations between the Ashanti and the Mossi, considering the reluctance of the middlemen traders to furnish any help in this matter. He discovered that Ashanti traders

> . . . sometimes travel as far as Aughoa, the Magho, and to the east of Kasogho. Aughoa is distant from Coomassie twenty-five journies by the Salgha and Yandy Roads, which would give a distance of three hundred that vegetable substance . . . by the name of Shea butter. (Dupuis 1824 : App. cvii)[1]

The Hausa merchants and caravaneers knew a great deal about the Mossi and their resources, but it was only with great difficulty that Clapperton persuaded Sultan Mohammed Bello of Sokoto to give him the following information:

> The country of Mouchier or Mouchi is situated to the west of Ghurma. It is vast and possesses a gold mine, rivers, forests and mountains. It is inhabited by tribes of the Sudan who possess many fast horses, and large donkeys. Their king is called Wagadougou; their asses are sent down to the Gondja to carry the drums of the army. (Clapperton 1829 : 323)

It is obvious that either Clapperton or his informant confused the capital of the Mossi with their king, and included parts of Ghana in their territory. Nevertheless, one does get an indication of the importance of livestock in Mossi trading.

The great bulk of the trade between the Mossi and their neighbors to the north and to the south was done through the medium of caravans which crisscrossed their territory. The first person to signal the existence of these caravans was Barth (1859 : III, 646–648) who, although he did not enter Mossi country during his extensive travels in the Sudan from 1849 to 1855, reported the existence of several caravan routes which traversed the Mossi from the desert to the forest. The first route he described proceeded from "Kirotashi, a town on the east side of the Niger, one day south of Say, to Woghodogho." Ten days out of Kirotashi caravans usually reached Tengkodogo, and on the thirteenth day they arrived at Koupela which according to

(1) The Aughoa referred to here is really "Wagha," the term often used by the Mossi when talking about their capital, Waghadougou. Magho is really "Mogho" the name of Mossi country itself, and Kasogho is the name of a province of Wagadougou commanded by a minister of the Moro Naba, the Kasogho Naba. Dupuis' report on the actual distance between Kumasis and Waghadougou is almost the same mileage as that of today. Koelle (1854 : 6) received a report from a slave liberated in Sierra Leone in 1854 that the great Mossi trading center "Kupeala is four days from Wardugu, the Mossi capital, whither the king of Asante often sends presents; and one month from Salak (Salaga), an Asante town, where they bring their cola-nuts."

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

Barth was "a well-frequented market place of Mosi, and of greater importance than all the other towns of Mosi; the governor's name is Nabere Gager. The inhabitants are celebrated archers." Barth states that by the fifteenth day, or two days later, the caravans usually arrived at Wagadougou, but he tells us in a note that:

> Other people, in going slowly from Kulfela to Woghodogho, spend eight days on the road, sleeping the first night in Pashipanga, the second in Tangay, the third in Zorogo, the next in a place ruled by a man called Mane Bogonje, the fifth in another village called Tangay, and reach Woghodogho on the eighth. (Marc 1909 : 27)[2]

Finally, he reports that another spur of this caravan route ran from Tengkodogo to Sansanne Mangho, in what is now Togoland. This journey took five days.

The second caravan route described by Barth ran from Djibo, the capital of the province of Gilgohi or Jilgodi (about 60 miles south from Montdoro, 55 miles West-Southwest from Aribinda and 35 miles South-Southwest from Tinie) by way of Kaya, to Mane and finally to Wagadougou. A caravan leaving Djibo entered Kelbo, the first village of the territory of Mossi on the eighth day, but according to Barth the "border district in general is regarded as very unsafe." On the fourteenth day the caravan entered Kaya;

> ... an important place where several roads meet. And from Kaya the route went to Wagadougou by way of Boussouma, Mane and Yako. It took a caravan ten days to traverse it.[3]

The third major caravan route that Barth described lay entirely within Mossi country. It ran from Mane to "Yadega" (probably Wahigouya, the capital of the kingdom of Yatenga) by way of Yako, and it took a caravan eight days to travel it. The fourth caravan route lay between Mane and a place called Kong by way of Tema, Yako, La and other places. On the tenth day a caravan reached Kong;

> ... a large place, according to my informant, inhabited by Bambara. It can scarcely be identical with the well-known Kong, if the itinerary be correct; but nevertheless it may be the case.

The first day after the caravan left Kong to return to Mane, it

(2) Barth received fairly accurate information about the caravan routes, and Marc was impressed with his data. Nevertheless, Marc finds it impossible to believe that caravans took two days to travel the twenty-five miles between Tengkodogo and Koupela, and only two more days to travel the ninety odd miles from Koupela to Wagadougou. Barth obviously erred here, but the timetable he gives for those persons "going slowly" from Koupela to Wagadougou appears to be quite correct.

(3) It is highly unlikely that a caravan going to Wagadougou from Kaya would have gone through Mane and Yako unless the caravaneers were interested in tapping the resources of these two western towns before heading straight south to their destination.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

stopped at "Fura, a large market place." On the fourth day it stopped at Dullugu (probably present-day Doulougou), and on the fifth day at "Dakay [or Rakay] a place belonging to the territory of Mosi." Finally, on the thirteenth day it arrived at Mane.[4] The last caravan route that Barth reported ran from:

> Kaye to Belussa [Boulsa], and thence to Belanga [Bilanga] ... From Belussa a person on horseback reaches Belanga comfortably the second day, the great station between these two towns being Alitinga, still belonging to Mosi, and an important place, inhabited by Mosi and Hausa traders; but common native travellers generally halt twice between Belanga and Alitinga, in Nyennyega and Koburi [Kouri], and once between Alitinga and Belanga, in a Gurma village called Yamba.

The goods which these caravans carried appear to have varied a great deal. Barth met a Mossi caravan at Dori, southeast of Timbuktu, and reported that to this market:

> The people of Mosi bring chiefly their fine donkeys, which are greatly sought after; and a numerous body of people of the Sheikh A'hmedu, of Hamda-Ailahi, had left a few days before with a number of asses which they had brought here. Besides asses, the people of Mosi supply this market with gabaga [cotton strips] or tari, as the Arabs near Timbuktu call them, cotton being extremely cheap in their country, so that in the great market place of that country, especially in Kulfela [Koupela, but really at Pouitenga a few miles away] an indigo-colored shirt is not worth more than from 700 to 800 [cowry] shells ... Besides salt, cotton strips, dyed cloth, Kola nuts, corn, and asses, some copper manufactured chiefly into large drinking vessels is also brought into the market by the people of Mosi. However, I do not think they manufacture the copper vessels themselves, but bring them from Asanti. (Barth 1859 : III, 203–4)

Adolphe Krause, a German who was actually the first European to enter Mossi country, went through Wagadougou with a load of kola nuts destined for Timbuktu. He joined the caravan at Salaga on July 7, 1885, stopped at the Bere market in Mossi country during August, and then proceeded to their capital where he remained until October 26 before resuming his northward journey (Krause 1887–8).

Felix Dubois, who visited Timbuktu in 1895, gives us some information on the actual products which the Mossi traded there. He reported that the Mossi came to the market organized into caravans of oxen, donkeys and porters, and brought such commodities as livestock, millet, rice, manioc, peanuts, honey, kola nuts, peppers, dried onions, tobacco, dried fish, soap, iron, antimony, lead, cotton bands, straw hats, mats, jars, pots and calabashes. These goods the Mossi

(4) Barth's skill as a reporter is evident here. He is quite correct in disbelieving that the caravans could have reached Kong on the tenth day. Marc, 1909, agrees with Barth.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

traded for such articles as needles, mirrors, beads, coral and amber, tea, coffee, fezes, tailored robes, and most important of all, salt (Dubois 1899 : 292–304). Presumably, by the time Dubois reported on this trade, the Mossi had stopped trading slaves and eunuchs into this region, because we know from other sources that these people were sold through Timbuktu as far north as Algeria and Constantinople.[5]

The caravans which brought desert and northern goods into Mossi country collected grain, cotton cloth, livestock and slaves to be sold in the forest areas. Captain Lonsdale, an Englishman who visited Salaga in 1881 and gave a good description of its markets and traders, includes among the latter

> ... the Mossi with his cattle, sheep and slaves—these latter, generally Gurunsi, are not exposed for sale in the street or market, but can be seen where the owner resides. (Lonsdale 1882)

The extent to which the Mossi people themselves participated in all aspects of the caravan trade which crossed their country is far from clear. Barth, Lonsdale and Dubois all report that the Mossi were members of the caravans both in the forest zone and in Timbuktu, and my own informants agree with these reports. In contrast, however, both Marc and Tauxier believe that the Mossi were seldom the actual caravaneers. Marc declares that the Yarse

> ... are the most numerous group devoting itself to commerce in the region which we occupy. This is equally true of the Hausa, but probably only over the last years. Moors come sometimes from Dori as far as Wagadougou. One seldom meets Mande-Dioulas. As for the pure Mossi, it was only a short while ago that they themselves began to follow the caravans. (Marc 1909 : 170–71)

Similarly, Tauxier states that

> ... it is not the Mossi who do this [caravan] trading but the Yarse we know so well, and the Hausa settled in Mossi territory. Mossi trade, therefore, is not really Mossi, or at least it was not in the past. If it has now begun to be to some extent, it is thanks to the French settlement in the territory. (Tauxier 1912 : 538)

In the face of the early reports by Barth and others, how does one resolve the contradiction apparent in Tauxier's comments? These early travelers might have mistaken the Yarse for Mossi since these

(5) Marc, 1909 : 170–171. "We met in Mossi country two natives who, when children, had been seized [as slaves] and led through Timbuktu as far as Algeria ... The commerce in slaves was doubled among the Mossi by commerce in eunuchs. Mossi country was one of those rare countries where people knew how to make them, and the Moro Nabas exported with great profit as far as Constantinople those whom they had had mutilated."

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

people have become Mossicized in language and culture, but it is doubtful whether they would have taken the Hausa for Mossi. The true Mossi may have played a minor role in the caravan trade, but I am certain that they took part in it and that they did so before the French conquest of their country.

There is little doubt that the Mossi traded with the caravans that passed *through* their country. Crozat, who visited Moro Naba Wobogo six years before the conquest, reported that the king

> . . . appeared to have had some business relations with white merchants who came up to Salaga every dry season. He sent horses to them in exchange for silver. He claims that he had no reasons to be pleased with their integrity and that the silver which they sent to him contained plenty of copper. It happens also that traders may come as far as Wagadougou, bringing merchandise of German origin. There was one of them on hand during my stay at Wagadougou. I was told that he was an important marabout, a shereef, perhaps an Arab or a Moor, for I was assured that he was very light in color. As was repeated to me several times, his relations with the king were limited to the solemn greetings on Fridays. He has never entered the royal hut in spite of being an important marabout. He was at Wagadougou for about three and one-half months, but he was compelled to return to the coast since the merchandise which he had brought was exhausted. He spoke no Mossi. (Crozat 1891)

The caravans which passed through Mossi country were well organized but seemed to have lacked the regularity which was characteristic of the trans-Sahara ones. Those caravans coming from the north were apparently more regular since they had to await the coming of the great trans-Sahara caravans, which brought them salt and other valuable merchandise. Those coming from Salaga and points south traveled at all times of the year, a fact which is corroborated by the voyage of Krauss, who arrived at the Bere market during August and the height of the Mossi planting season. This was a period of scarcity or "hungry period" as Krauss himself observed, and it is doubtful whether the Mossi had much to trade at this time. Nevertheless, caravaneers always found some trade goods at the larger Mossi market centers all through the year, even if only cloth and cotton bands.

The main season for external trade in Mossi country came after the harvest. In the words of Marc, who served there shortly after the conquest:

> Towards the end of the rainy season, in September or October, the Yarse begin to assemble the livestock in order to leave for the south. In certain large commercial centers like Kaya, Pouitenga, Dakay, one finds around this period the owners of livestock: Mossi chiefs, Fulani or rich natives, who are ready to sell their animals. People also assemble sheep of

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

people also assemble sheep of
the Mossi variety, which are very puny. The larger variety of long-haired Macina sheep are seldom exported. Once the livestock has been assembled, the chief of the caravan would also provide himself with cotton bands. This native fabric has often been described; it is commonly used on the caravan routes to pay for the food of the travellers. (Marc 1909 : 172)

Most of the caravans through Mossi country traveled as much as fifteen or twenty miles a day. They left at the first sign of dawn, traveled steadily until the heat became too intense, and then stopped to rest. They resumed their march when the sun was midway between the zenith and the horizon, and then stopped at some village or stream for the night. This schedule was followed on the next day if the caravan was far from a market center, but in the vicinity of a large market the caravan might remain stationary as many as six days while its merchants traded for more livestock or merchandise. This being the case, it is difficult to gauge how long it took the caravans to make the journey from Salaga in Ghana to Timbuktu. Our best data come from an analysis of Krauss' itinerary. He left Salaga with a caravan on July 7, 1885, heading north through Walwale, and arrived in Bere, a distance of some 250 miles (today's road mileage) towards the end of August. Famine delayed the caravan at Bere for some time, and he did not complete the 50 miles or so to Wagadougou until September 24. He remained in the Mossi capital until October 26, some thirty-two days, before his caravan headed north again through Tema, Yatenga and Bandiagara. Krauss does not tell us when he reached Douentza, some 400 miles northweast of Wagadougou, or how long he remained there, but on December 7, a few days after he had left Douenzta on the last 200- or 250-mile leg of his voyage to Timbuktu, the Moro Naba ordered him to return to Wagadougou. It is possible that it took Krauss' caravan some thirty-five odd days to make the trip from Wagadougou to Douentza. His return to Wagadougou took him only about thirty days, since he arrived there on January 7, 1886. He apparently had to wait some fifteen days there for a caravan going south, because he did not leave the Mossi capital until January 22, 1886 (Krause 1887–88). Judging from this itinerary, it probably took caravans between five and six months to travel from the forest zones to the desert, a distance of about a thousand miles at the most. This averages about six or seven miles a day, with the normal stops for rest and marketing, instead of the fifteen or twenty miles a day which the average caravan covered when it was on the road.

The caravans did not encounter many dangers or difficulties during their voyage. When the caravaneers had friends along the way they stopped at their friends' homes for the night, and when they camped in uninhabited places men were posted to protect the goods and live-
stock against marauding beasts and thieves.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

stock against marauding beasts and thieves. All caravaneers had to pay a tax to the local chiefs to cross their borders or to stop in their markets to trade. Binger reported that the caravans which passed through the market center of Wagadougou had to give the Moro Naba a share of their merchandise, aside from the presents which they gave to him. He also reported that the horse traders from the Yatenga, in the north of Mossi country, and the Hausa caravaneers, were sometimes forced to sell part of their wares to the Moro Naba at one-hundredth the purchase price (Binger 1892 : II, 292–300). Not all the caravaneers submitted to extortion, however, and at one period many of them traded with Mane instead of passing through Wagadougou where the tariffs were too high. On the other hand, the Mossi chiefs did not tolerate any trespassing on their territories by caravans that did not pay taxes. Those who tried to avoid doing so were subjected to attack by the mounted nobles *(nakomce)* on behalf of the district chiefs. Wise caravan leaders not only paid their taxes but established close relationships with the chiefs in order to receive adequate protection from some nobles who illegally attacked and looted the caravans.

It is impossible to know the actual volume of caravan trade which passed through Mossi country, but we can get a fairly good idea of it by examining the customs reports on goods crossing the border between Mossi country and the northern territories of the Gold Coast in the few years just following European conquest.[6] For 1901 and 1903 the official figures were:

TABLE 28A

Mossi Trade (1901–3)

Year	*Horses*	*Cattle*	*Sheep and Goats*	*Loaded Donkeys*	*Bales of Cotton Cloth*
1901	126	3,111	18,181	2,095	236
1903	196	6,624	30,892	4,294	369

Lucien Marc, who had the opportunity to check the volume of this trade for 1904 and 1905, guessed that about 16,000 cattle and 75,000 sheep and goats passed through the customs post in Mossi country. Furthermore, he believed that since

> ... the Mossi also supply in part the markets of Togoland and the market at Bondoukou [Ivory Coast], one can estimate at least an annual export of 20,000 cattle and 100,000 sheep or goats. The import of kola nuts is at least 500 tons. (Marc 1909 : 178)

(6) Great Britain Parliamentary Papers: Cd. 788-27, no. 357, Northern territories of Gold Coast, report of 1901 in Acc. and Papers, vol. LXIV 1902. Cd. 2238-6, no. 429, N.Ts of Gold Coast, report of 1903 in Acc. and Papers, 1904, and 1905, vol. LI.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

It is clear that the volume of this trade could not have been enlarged since the French conquest which, as we know, had disrupted Mossi society. Therefore our conclusion must be that it must have existed prior to the coming of the Europeans.

The caravaneers used cowries and cloth as trade currency and in some cases even bartered one type of commodity for another. Cowries appear to have been the chief currency used and came close to being used for all purposes. Evidence for the use of cloth as currency comes from Barth and Marc. Barth met a trader who had

> ... a good quantity of the gabaga, or cotton strips, of Mosi with him, which form the staple currency in the whole tract of country from Libta to Timbuktu, ten Dr'a being reckoned equal to one hundred shells. (Barth 1859 : III, 198)

The big rolls of cotton cloth which Marc saw being loaded by Mossi caravaneers were said by them to serve the purpose of buying food ("They are for eating") in regions where cloth was the necessary currency (Marc 1909 : 172 f.n.). The traders apparently resorted to barter whenever and wherever they could or when their currency was in short supply. This appears to have been the case when Binger visited the Mossi in 1888. Cowries were then in short supply and the people were using slaves, valued at 50,000 to 65,000 cowries apiece, to obtain goods. Horses could be bought for as many as two or four slaves apiece. Traders apparently kept the cowry equivalence in mind when using other commodities to barter with, but we cannot be sure of this since Binger himself, and not the traders, may have been conscious of the equivalence (Binger 1892 : II, 498).

The prices which the traders paid and received for their goods differed greatly from place to place, according to the season of the year and over a span of several years. The earliest price data are given by Barth for the 1850's:

> As regards Selga [Salaga], the district to which the Hausa traders go for their supply of this article, three points are considered essential to the business of the Kola trade; first, that the people of Mosi bring their asses; secondly, that the Tonawa, or natives of Asanti, bring the nut in sufficient quantities; and thirdly, that the state of the road is such as not to prevent the Hausa people from arriving. If one of these conditions is wanting, the trade is not flourishing. The price of the asses rises with the cheapness of the guro [kola nut]. The average price of an ass in the market of Selga is 15,000 [cowry] Shell: While in Hausa the general price does not exceed 5,000. But the fataki, or native traders, take only as many asses with them from Hausa as are necessary for transporting their luggage, as the toll, or

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

fitto, levied upon each ass by the petty chiefs on the road is very considerable. From 5,000 to 6,000 guro, or kola nuts, constitute an assload.

Selga, the market place for this important article, being, it appears, a most miserable town, where even water is very scarce and can only be purchased at an exorbitant price, the merchants always manage to make their stay here as short as possible, awaiting the proper season in Yendi, a town said to be as large as Timbuktu, or in Kulfela, the great market place of Mosi; and they are especially obliged to wait in case they arrive at the beginning of the rainy season, there being no kola nuts before the latter part of the Kharif. The price of this nut in Timbuktu varies from 20 to 100 shells each, and it always constitutes a luxury; so that, even on great festivals, alms consisting of this article are distributed by the rich people of the town. (Barth 1859 : II, 364)

The other data we have on prices paid for goods come from the period between 1890 and 1910, at which time French francs had been introduced. At this time the official value of one franc was 1,000 cowries. Around 1904, a trader paid about 50 francs or 50,000 cowries for a head of cattle in Mossi country and sold it for about double the price at Salaga. With the proceeds of this transaction he bought kola nuts at the rate of one franc or 100 cowries per hundred. Thus with the sale of one cow a trader could obtain 10,000 kolas, these being valued at about 500 francs or 500,000 cowries in Mossi country and at 20 or 200 cowries each at Sarfere and Timbuktu (Marc 1909 : 173–4). At Timbuktu about this same period, 1895, traders could buy salt at about 30 francs for a slab weighing between 60 and 100 pounds and sell it for 45 francs at Sarafere, for 60 francs at Djenne, for between 70 and 80 francs at San, and "thus progressively more until they reached Mossi country" (Dubois 1899 : 276). In 1910, Mossi traders bought cattle for about 40 to 100 francs, horses for about 90 francs, donkeys for 25 francs, and so on, and sold these animals in Salaga for three times the prices. There they bought kolas at 2 Fr. 50 per thousand, and sold them at 20 per thousand at Leo on the Mossi border, 35 francs per thousand at Wagadougou, 50 francs at Wahigouya, 60 francs at Saravere, and 100 francs per thousand at Timbuktu. Here these traders bought bars of salt weighing about 75 pounds for between 10 and 12 francs a piece, and sold them for between 40 to 60 francs at Wahigouya, and for from 80 to 100 francs a piece at Dedougou and points as far down as Wagadougou (Tauxier 1917 : 221).

Not all the profit from this trade went into the pockets of the traders. We have the report of Binger that the chiefs, besides commandering the goods at less than one-hundredth their purchase price, received taxes on each caravan which passed through their territory.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

territory. This report is substantiated by Barth. Marc adds that the caravaneers had

> . . . a considerable amount of incidental expenses. Ten thousand kolas called for two asses or four porters for whom it was necessary to provide food during close to two months. Formerly there had been a certain number of local exactions to pay each time that the caravans crossed a new country. Now there are taxes on the caravans in the Gold Coast and also in French territory. It is also necessary to pay for ferryman who transports the livestock across the Volta [River]. There are risks, and occasionally cattle, fatigued by the trip, arrive in such bad shape that they are sold more cheaply than they had cost. Finally, the realization of profits is often difficult, the kola market being, in the commercial centers of the Mossi, subject to considerable fluctuations at the time when the caravans return. (Marc 1909 : 174)[7]

Sometimes the caravaneers made extensive use of middlemen and did not realize all the profits. Marc, who was stationed at the customs post at Leo on the Mossi border with the Gold Coast, wrote:

> The livestock is bought upon arrival by interpreter-brokers, middlemen between the butchers and the meat merchants, to whom the caravaneers are practically forced to resort. These men buy all the kola nuts brought by the forest natives, and control the market prices . . . These interpreter-brokers apparently speculate on livestock in a most curious way. They have scouts who go out to meet the caravans, sometimes two days' march to the north. These scouts attempt to alarm the travellers with tendentious remarks, until they are willing to cede their herds at a low price. Some times, at the height of the business season—that is, in January and February—the livestock prices may fluctuate by one hundred per cent within a few weeks. The Mande-Dioula vie in eloquence, the Yarse and Mossi in politeness, the Hausa in friendliness. In reality, there is here, an embryonic trading center, a veritable stock exchange, using extensively indigenous methods. ((Marc 1909 : 173)

According to most reports, all the larger market centers of Mossi country were like this.

Caravan centers, like all the lesser market centers in Mossi country, provided merchants not only with trading opportunities but also with occasions for conviviality after hectic days of travel. At Dakay south of Wagadougou, livestock traders found musicians, singers, and the most beautiful dancers in the country. And according to Marc, during the whole caravan season the market was abundantly furnished with beer (Marc 1909 : 175). But if the Mossi enjoyed themselves at

(7) Tauxier (1912 : 539) states that each porter was paid 35 francs for the thirty-five days of travels or at the rate of one franc per day. In addition a caravaneer spent about 300 cowries a day on food for each of his bearers.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

175 366 437 54 their own commercial centers, they acted quite differently outside their country. Dubois reports that at Timbuktu, "the great town of pleasure" with the freest morals in the Sudan, the merchants from Bamako, Djenne, Sansanding and Touat spent a great deal of money in pleasure and in gifts to the beautiful women, but the "Mossi did not waste their money and left as soon as they had finished their affairs" (Dubois 1899 : 292–300).

175 437 439 648 The days of the caravans are now over in Mossi country, even though large groups of traders carry on the traditional commerce in livestock, cotton, kola nuts, some dried fish, and salt. As soon as the French conquered th country they formulated plants to control the caravans. One of the earliest reports, for June 1899, reads:

> The country is calm and direct administration was established at Koupela, Mane, Yake . . . The Mossi trade is mainly with the English colony of the Gold Coast. It consists mainly of livestock, very plentiful in Mossi country, which is exchanged for merchandise from England; copper and material goods . . . Our task will be to discover the materials of the northern Ivory Coast which could be exchanged for cattle, and when this information is forthcoming we should be able to direct the caravans quite easily to the Ivory Coast. At the same time the English will see their provisions of cattle and sheep diminish. They will flood us less with their cotton cloth, with their glass beads, and with their kola nuts. In their place, the products of French manufacture can arrive to us through the Ivory Coast after being exchanged for the products of our colony there.[8]

439 167 464 These plans did not succeed. The Mossi still export a great deal of their products towards the forest zones of Ghana, including their "numerous laborers" which, according to Beauminy writing in 1919, were "the principal riches actually utilizable in Mossi country". (Beauminy 1919 : 71–78). The migrants themselves are, in a sense, the greatest traders in contemporary Mossi society.

PRESENT-DAY TRADE

439 [441] There is a constant flow of goods between Mossi country and the Ivory Coast and Ghana. Much of the trade to the former region is in the hands of the large commercial companies and as such is beyond the purview of this paper. What is of interest here is the trade which [472] is conducted by the ordinary people. A great deal of this trade is highly unorganized and the result of one or two men, or as many as five men, joining together to trade goods to and from Ghana and the [178] Ivory Coast. The types of goods sent down to these two areas are the [113] same as those traded in pre-European times.

(8) Unpublished document in the archives of *Institut Français d'Afrique Noire*, Wagadougou, Voltaic Republic.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

all of local manufacture and in great abundance. Local cloth is also very abundant. However, there are scarcely any imported objects salt, kola nuts, copper rings and extremely rare European fabrics. The salt always comes from the north. During my stay at Wagadougou I saw the arrival of a convoy of five or six small-sized mules loaded with this merchandise." Crozat felt that the Wagadougou market with its mainly local products was inferior to the markets at Woroudoy and Bobo-Dioulasso which he found less crowded, but which were, in his words, "true *entrepots* of imported merchandise."

Tauxier gives us a better picture of the goods found in the markets of Mossi country before the Europeans arrived. His reports list few imported products except salt and kola nuts. The preponderance of goods sold were such local foodstuffs as maize, manioc, peppers, tomatoes, squash, karite or shea butter, locust-bean balls, locust-bean flour, rice and a local variety of potatoes. Other foodstuffs included were honey, beer, butchered meat, chickens, and guinea fowls. Tobacco both for chewing and smoking was also available, and so was hemp for making rope. Raw cotton, cotton thread, cloth and tailored cotton garments were also present, and so was indigo for dyeing the cotton materials. Other goods included hides, sandals, pouches, amulets, iron items such as axes, hoes, knives, scythes, locks, clubs and spearpoints, bracelets and anklets made of copper by the lost-wax process, baskets, mats and hats made out of local grasses, pottery, pipes and wooden stools (Tauxier 1912 : 466 ff.). By 1914 Mangin could add little to this list of local products, sold in the markets, but added such foreign items as "matches, glass trinkets, handkerchiefs, basins, dishes, perfumes, and even firecrackers" (Mangin 1921 : 53).

The markets of contemporary Mossi society contain all of the articles found in pre-European times and those seen there by Mangin in 1914. In the larger markets one now can find such additional items as bicycles, razor blades, plastic raincoats and other plastic products, and the latest "rock 'n roll" records from the United States. The goods found in the smaller district and village markets tend to be of the traditional variety. But even here it is possible to buy refined cane sugar, matches, plastic necklaces, shoe polish, nail polish, toilet water, glass beads, costume jewelry, chinaware, and glass and enamel containers. In some of the smaller markets it is even possible to buy wheat bread made of imported flour, and bottled beer and soda water. The more different types of goods entering the larger markets, the richer the variety found in the smaller markets, since local merchants are quick to take advantage of the prestige value of any new produce and introduce it into the rural areas. The only barrier to this type of commercial activity is the relative poverty of the rural people.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

175 436 437 Cowries used to be chief medium of exchange in Mossi markets until the Europeans arrived. In addition the people bartered specific goods for other products. The prices of goods in these markets fluctuated from time to time. Prices were highest during the planting season when most goods were scarce, and lowest during the harvest periods, but we have little precise information about the prices of goods in the traditional markets. Even Barth's information is too sketchy to deal with. Our first reliable data come from Tauxier, whose writings cover the first decade (1896-1906) of the conquest. Using the then official rate of one franc equals 1,000 cowries, the prices of a few representative products were: horses, 40 to 100 francs (40,000 to 100,000 cowries); cattle, 30 to 40 francs (30,000 to 40,000 cowries); chickens, 250 cowries; guinea fowls, 250 to 300 cowries; hides, 3,000 cowries; pottery jars, 300 cowries; cotton trousers, 200 cowries; baskets, 1,500 cowries; and locust-bean balls, 100 cowries (Tauxier 1912 : 466 ff.).

175 435 Mangin, whose work covers the period from about 1910 to 1913, when the value of the franc was lowered to one franc equals 700 to 800 cowries, lists the approximate prices for the following goods; "Millet, 0.02 franc a kilogram; rice, 0.10 franc a kilogram; *fabirama*, 0.05 franc a kilogram; shea butter, 0.50 franc a kilogram; milk butter, 1.50 francs a kilogram; peanuts, 0.07 franc a kilogram; peanut oil, 0.50 franc a liter; one jar of ordinary millet beer, containing about six to eight liters, 0.20 franc; one jar of strong millet beer *(tose)*, containing about six to eight liters, 0.40 franc; hydromel *(bese)*, 0.15 franc a liter; chicken, 0.40 franc; average goat, 3 to 4 francs; large goat, 8 to 10 francs; average sheep, 3.50 francs for a ram, 4 francs, for an ewe; large sheep, 8 to 10 francs; donkey, 25 to 30 francs; horse, 150 francs; small cow (no hump), 50 francs; zebu cow, 70 francs; goat skin, 0.30 franc; cow skin, 1 franc; salt bars, from 1.50 to 2 francs a kilogram; kola nuts, from 0.03 to 0.10 franc apiece; one hoe, about 0.60 franc; cloth: strip of white cloth, 0.05 franc, about 0.60 franc a cubit; white blanket, 2 francs; indigo-dyed blanket, 3 francs; striped blanket, 4 francs; medium-sized shirt, 2.50 francs" (Mangin 1921 : 53). In dealing with these prices, a number of things should be kept in mind: first of all, these prices fluctuated very much during the year; secondly [436] they varied from region to region within the country; and thirdly, although these prices are given in francs during this period, it was still possible to use cowries to buy a large number of the products.

177 436 [43] [42] Enormous changes have taken place in the Mossi economic and exchange systems over the decades following the studies of Tauxier and Mangin. Even before, but certainly after World War I, the French pressure on the Mossi to pay taxes in francs finally resulted

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

to be sold the article at a lower price. The result is that the pace of commerce in a Mossi market is somewhat relaxed, but the lack of intense competition prevents a great deal of hositility and quarreling among the market people.

The amount of small trading which takes place in a Mossi market is fantastic, so much so that one gains the impression that some people trade simply for the sake of trading. Everyone tries to get money so that he or she can buy some desired object, but it is impossible for one to obtain a clear idea of what kind of profit, if any, people make from their commerce. In fact, the idea of a profit does not seem to be important when people are selling their own products. Most people only think about profit when they buy things to resell—whether these things are of African or European manufacture. This, incidentally, is one of the reasons why the prices of foodstuffs are about 10 per cent lower in the country districts than at Wagadougou, and concommitently, why imported products are 10 to 20 per cent higher in the rural districts than at Wagadougou where they are bought. When a woman takes such products as cotton, beans or millet to market, she may gross about 100 francs in the course of the day. But out of this she may give a few francs to her husband to buy kola nuts, a few francs to her daughter to buy a plastic necklace, and spend the rest for a cotton skirt, a piece of meat and condiments for her sauces. Men whose wives do not bring many goods to market must usually give them about 100 francs to spend on the various products the family needs. There are no official restrictions on the kinds of goods which may or may not be sold in the Mossi markets. In pre-European times slaves and eunuchs were the common stock-in-trade of the major markets and of some of the smaller ones as well. The only active supervision that existed and still exists concerns the butchering of meat: Every person who sells meat in the market must exhibit the skin of the butchered animal in a public place so that there will be no question as to the ownership of the animal. If the meat in question is the remains of a cow killed and half-eaten by a lion, then the village or district chief must be notified before the meat enters the market. The person in charge of this task used to be, and often still is, a man called the Kos Naba, a kind of sales chief. He also formerly doubled as a tax collector for the rulers and chiefs. Another official, the Raga Naba, where he still exists, is more concerned with protecting the lives and property of the people who trade at the markets, but he also supervises the sale of some commodities there and formerly also collected taxes for his superior.

In pre-European times, every important Mossi prince and district chief had the counterpart of a Kos Naba and Raga Naba, to collect taxes in their markets.

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

443 taxes in their markets. The French abolished both of these offices
557 when they took over the country, because they looked upon them as
651 purely exploitative rather than regulatory agents. But like so many
656 other Mossi political institutions which the French have "abolished,"
178 the Kos Naga and Raga Naba persist in many of the districts, and per-
648 haps even in such large centers as Wagadougou. These officials persist
829 because one of the basic assumptions of the Mossi is that everything
825 must have a "chief." They believe that even the animals in the bush have chiefs, and if men, too, did not have chiefs then social life would be chaos. Thus, in the rural areas many or most district chiefs have retained their market officials even though the roles of these officials have become highly attenuated and so secretive that their existence is often denied.

175 443 651 644 Taxes collected at the market places played an important part in supporting the traditional political hierarchy of the Mossi people. The Kos Naba collected 250 cowries in taxes for every beef cattle slaughtered at the market and took their humps and gave them to a palace official called the Nemdo Naba (meat chief) for distribution in the royal household. He also collected 250 cowries on every cow sold there, but did not usually tax goats and sheep. In lieu of this he occasionally took a head or two of these animals from each herd that passed through the market and sent them to the palace kitchens. Donkeys were also taxed at the rate of 200 cowries per head sold in the market. Horses sold to the nobility were not taxed, but those exported were taxed about 300 cowries.

175 443 651 463 The Raga Naba collected the taxes on other commodities sold at market. Cotton weavers paid him taxes according to the size of their bolts of cloth, and cotton producers paid as much as 20 cowries on especially large sales of their raw produce. The tailors and dyers paid no fixed tax on their wares, but were asked to send clothing to the palace. Every donkey- or ox-load of salt which entered the market place was assessed a tax of 300 cowries. The smiths were not taxed in cowries, but had to supply the wives of the Moro Naba with hoes and the palace personnel with arrowheads, spearpoints and iron clubs. The jewelers also sent bracelets as presents to the ruler. There were no fixed taxes on cereals, vegetables and cooked food sold at market, but each day the Raga Naba, accompanied by several pages or retainers carrying baskets, went from vendor to vendor taking several calabash-fuls of their produce for use in the palace. In addition, the vendors of cooked food had to feed the young grooms of the Moro Naba who were not regularly fed by the palace household. The beer sellers, too, while they were not assessed taxes, contributed a good percentage of their beverage to palace and market personnel who demanded the

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

customary "taste" with greater frequency and freedom than did ordinary buyers. But the most valuable tax collected by the Raga Naba was on the sale of slaves, whose buyers paid a tax of 1,000 cowries per head.

There is some evidence, mainly from Europeans, that the Mossi occasionally may have found the market taxes prohibitive. Binger reports that during his visit to the Mossi in 1888, the high taxes exacted by the Moro Naba were "one of the causes which placed Wagadougou in second place [as a market town] and which made Mane the commercial capital of Mossi country" (Binger 1892 : 467). Binger, himself, was caught in the institutionalized gift system and wrote sarcastically: "The day of the market [at Wagadougou] the receipts are good. People bring every-thing to the palace including millet as well as hoes or peanuts, and everything is accepted. *All this giving is left to the generosity of the customers . . .*" (Binger 1892 : 465) (his italics). Even so, one cannot be sure that the Mossi felt the same way about paying taxes to their rulers as Binger felt. There is, incidentally, always an air of mutual recriminations among the Mossi and their rulers about the level of reciprocation between them. The people admit that the chiefs are indispensable; yet they complain that they are greedy—they "eat" too much. The chiefs insist that it is difficult to rule a territory and complain that the people are ungrateful.

SOCIAL AND RITUAL ASPECTS OF THE MARKETPLACE

Although the offices of Kos Naba and Raga Naba have been abolished officially, these officials still exist in many Mossi districts, and even when they do not exist, some men acting in their stead appropriate commodities in the markets for the chiefs. Furthermore, the *nakomce* (plural of *nabiga*—chief's child) or nobles still wander about the market places taking handfuls of kola nuts, peanuts and everything they need without the people becoming angry or complaining to the French about it. Once when I visited a market in the company of a *nabiga*, the local Raga Naba came up to where we were buying meat and indicated to the butcher that one of his customers was a *nabiga* and that he should treat him accordingly. It is not because of ignorance that the market people continue to grant these privileges to the nobles and the chiefs, but rather because they believe that only the market officials, and not the Europeans, can take care of the markets.

One of the most important tasks of the Raga Naba (or in the absence of this official, the Kos Naba) is to propitiate the *tengkouga* in the market place, or supervise the sacrifices which the *tengsobas* make to them. The task of the market spirits is believed to be so difficult—